This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

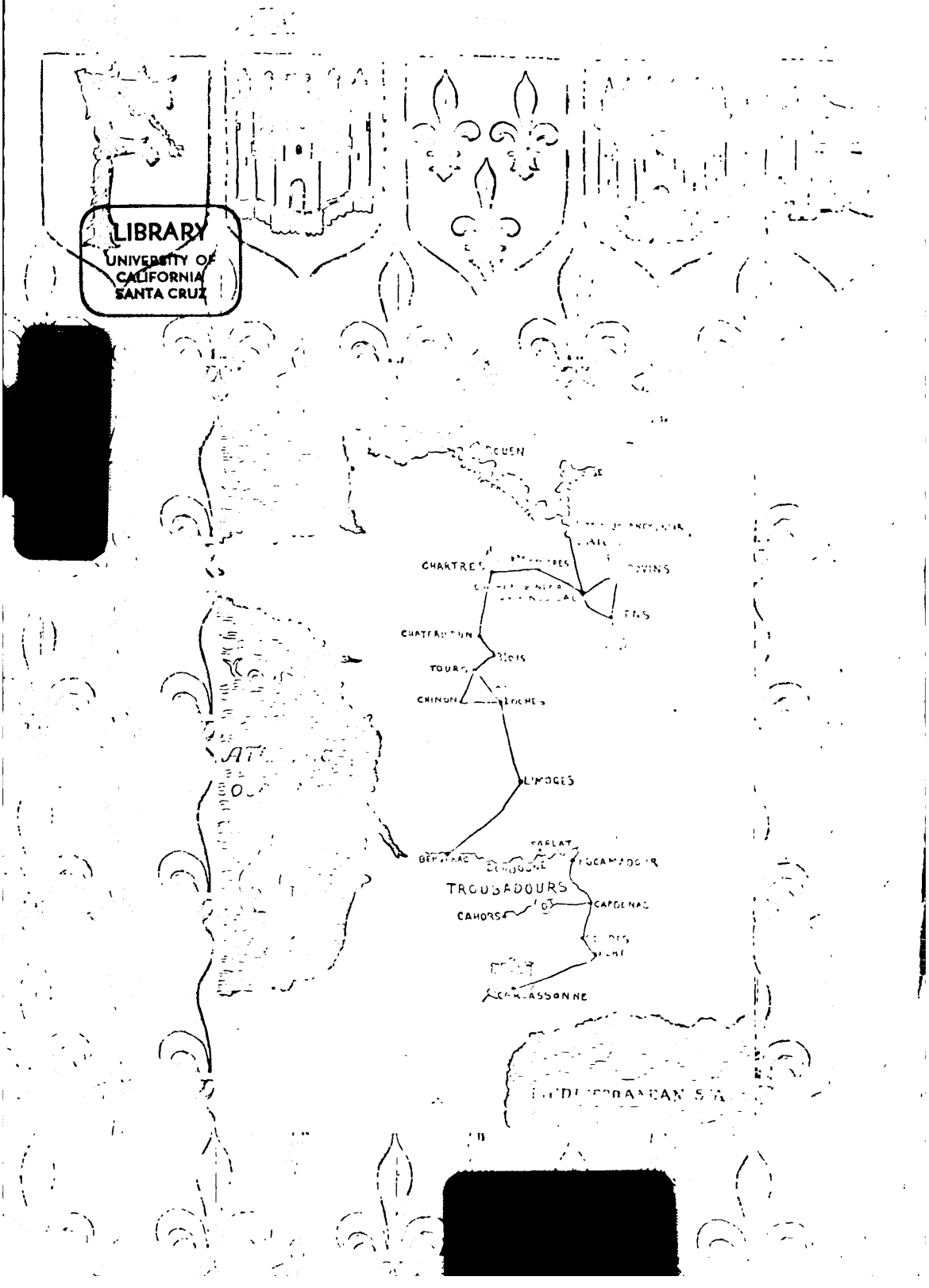
About Google Book Search

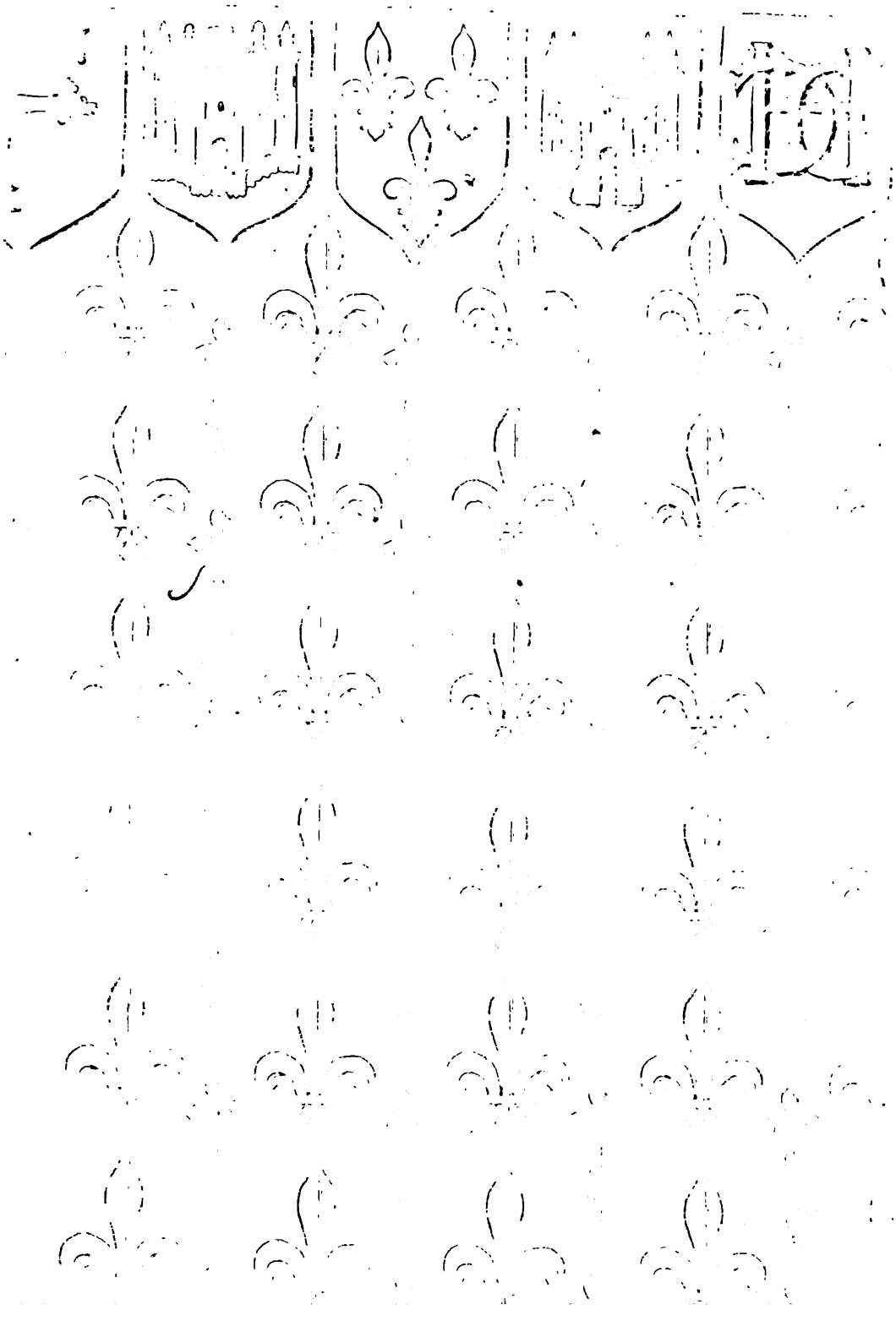
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

THROUGH THE FRENCH PROVINCES

ERNEST PEIXOTTO

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ





From Mrs. Walker
Dec. 25. 1909
to
Aug. 13,

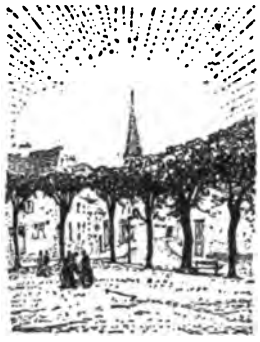
THROUGH THE FRENCH PROVINCES

THROUGH THE FRENCH PROVINCES

BY

ERNEST PEIXOTTO

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
MCMIX

Copyright, 1909, by
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Published October, 1909

DC
28
P35

PREFACE

YEARS ago, when I went as a mere boy to study in France, the country and its picturesque towns and villages took a strong hold upon me. Since then, despite repeated sojourns and years of travel, the French provinces seem ever to unfold new riches and to prove an inexhaustible mine of interest. With the possible exception of Italy, I know of no country whose little towns so well repay investigation, and yet, until recent years of automobiling, how little have they been visited by the tourist!

If the succeeding pages serve to open new vistas to the careful traveller—to the lover of the picturesque or the student of architecture—and bring to his notice some hitherto unknown corners of an altogether fascinating country, the purpose of this book will have been fulfilled.

The writer wishes to thank the friends in France who have contributed so much to the pleasure of these journeys and made so many of their most agreeable features possible.

CONTENTS

MOTOR-BOAT CRUISES— PAGE

I. DOWN THE SEINE 3

II. UP THE OISE 30

LITTLE JOURNEYS FROM PARIS 51

UNFREQUENTED CHATEAUX NEAR FONTAINEBLEAU—

I. VAUX-LE-VICOMTE 71

II. COURANCES 82

III. FLEURY-EN-BIÈRE 89

MOTOR DRIVES—

I. TO PROVINS, SENS, AND NEMOURS 97

II. TO ETAMPES, MAINTENON, AND CHARTRES 110

III. TO THE VALLEY OF THE LOIRE 121

IN TOURAINE—

I. CLIFF-DWELLERS 129

II. CHINON AND LOCHES 140

LIMOGES AND ITS ENAMELS 155

IN THE LAND OF THE TROUBADOURS 171

CONTENTS

PAGE

A FORGOTTEN PILGRIMAGE 187

THE VALLEY OF THE LOT 203

THREE OLD HILL-TOWNS OF GASCONY—

I. CORDES 217

II. ALBI 228

III. CARCASSONNE 236

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		PAGE
Carcassonne	*Frontispiece*	
A Quiet Part of the Seine at Poissy		5
Old Mill at Dennemont		7
In the Lock at Meulan		9
The Races at Mantes	*facing*	10
Tower of St. Maclou, Mantes		13
The Ferry at Vetheuil		15
Château Gaillard	*facing*	18
Market-place, Pont de l'Arche		21
Place des Arts, Rouen		23
Rue de l'Epicerie, Rouen		25
Rouen from the Faubourg of Saint Sever		27
Conflans		31
Poplar-fringed Banks		33
The River at Pontoise		35
The Oise at L'Isle Adam		37
The Church of St. Leu d'Esserent		39
Pont Sainte Maixence		41

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		PAGE
The Castle of Pierrefonds		45
The Park, Saint Cloud	*facing*	52
The Marchandes des Quatre Saisons		54
The Casino and Lake, Enghien		57
At "Robinson's"		59
Ruins of the Abbey of Vaux de Cernay		63
"The roadway describes a broad circle"		69
The Entrance Gates, Vaux		75
Vaux-le-Vicomte		77
Vaux-le-Vicomte from the Parterre		79
"Until we came again to small patches of woodland"		83
Courances		85
Courances from the Gardens		87
Corner of the Moat, Fleury		91
Fleury and its Church	*facing*	92
Fleury, the Forecourt		93
"The broad white road and its attendant trees"		99
The Rue Couverte, Provins	*facing*	100
Sens on a Fête Day	*facing*	102
Sens Cathedral from the Tapis Vert		105
The Château of Nemours		106
The Walls and Gate, Moret		108
Old Mill near Etampes		111
Etampes, the Church		113

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

The Castle of Philip Augustus, Dourdan 115

Château of Maintenon 117

The great plains of the Beauce 118

Chartres Cathedral . . . . . *facing* 118

Chateau de Bénéhart 119

The Court, Château de Chaumont 123

"Towered a huge mass of overhanging rock" 131

A Cliff-dwelling 133

A Cliff-dweller's Home 137

Chinon from the Market-place . . . . . *facing* 140

The Castle, Chinon 141

An Old Street, Chinon 143

Loches 145

"Rises like a fortress" 147

The Porte Picoys and Hôtel de Ville, Loches 149

Rue de la Boucherie, Limoges 157

Pont Saint Etienne, Limoges 160

Ox-cart 165

House at Sarlat where Etienne de la Boëtie was born 172

On every crag is perched a feudal castle . . . . . *facing* 174

"The mediæval vision of Begnac seated on its proud cliff" . . 175

"Vers" 177

The Shadowy Vale of Rocamadour 181

The Chapels 189

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		PAGE
Procession on Ascension Day		191
Rocamadour from the River Alzon		193
Rocamadour	*facing*	194
Crucifix in the Church of Saint Sauveur	*facing*	198
"With his pig hunting for truffles"		204
Cajarc		206
Saint Cirq-la-Popie	*facing*	208
Pont Valentré, Cahors		209
Barbreau and Tour des Pendus, Cahors		211
Cordes	*facing*	218
The Book of Iron		219
A By-way		221
Stairway of the Pater Noster, Cordes		225
The Cathedral and Archbishop's Palace, Albi		229
A Side Street, Albi		230
Albi Cathedral from the Market	*facing*	230
A Lane, Albi		233
The Upper City, Carcassonne		237
The Porte Narbonnaise, Carcassonne		239

MOTOR-BOAT CRUISES

MOTOR-BOAT CRUISES

I

DOWN THE SEINE

IT had all been arranged a week or two before. I was to spend Saturday night with my friend in his villa at La Frette, not far from Maisons Laffitte, and early Sunday morning we were to be up and off to Poissy, so as to arrive for the signal gun at nine o'clock.

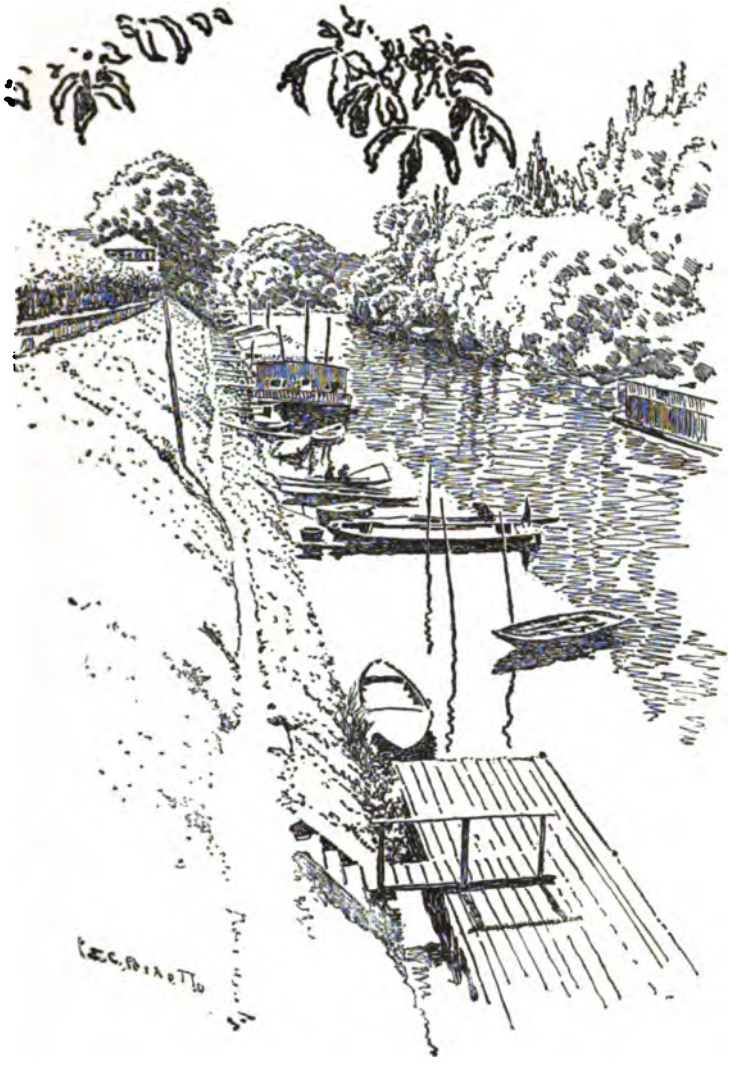
As we looked from our window over a broad curve of the river, an ideal July morning greeted us—not too warm, a clear blue sky, and just enough of a breeze to temper the sun's rays. On reaching the river bank, we found the *Narcisse* ready and waiting, with George, the *mécanicien*, giving the final adjustment to his motor. Many a happy day had I passed in this same boat, cruising up and down the river with my friend C—— and his sister, but neither he nor I

had ever before attempted so long a voyage as this on which we were about to start.

Its programme, arranged by the Hélice Club (read Propeller Club) of France, was as follows: To start from the bridge at Poissy at nine on Sunday morning; reach Mantes at noon; there to remain for the races or go on at will; but all the boats were finally to meet on the following afternoon in the lock at Martot, the first above Rouen, so that all could dock at the landing stage in Rouen at about the same time.

We were off in good season, and it was not long before we came in sight of the bridge at Poissy, with its long, low row of buttressed arches so agreeably topped by an old mill perched over the centre pier. Here we found a score of other boats, waiting, like ourselves, for the signal of departure. They represented all types of motor boats: pleasure yachts, racers, cruisers, and launches. Our boat was a trim little craft in the smaller cruiser class, with a broad, comfortable seat for three just forward of the motor.

As far as I know, she is the only motor boat on the Seine—or on any of the French rivers, for that matter—that flies the American flag, and this badge of the foreigner attracted universal attention, both from the



A Quiet Part of the Seine at Poissy

people gathered in large numbers on the bridge and on the river bank, from our fellow yachtsmen, and especially from the committee on board the *Korrigan*, which was acting as flag-ship of the squadron.

Instantly we were dubbed "le petit Américain!"

Promptly at nine o'clock the *Korrigan's* cannon gave the signal for departure, and every boat fled off at top speed through the arches of the bridge and on down the river. How the flags fluttered and snapped in the wind! How the smaller craft rocked and tumbled in the wake of their larger sisters! Though this was a cruise and not a race, who, under the circumstances, could refrain from a test of fleetness? The big boats, with powerful motors coughing and wheezing as they shot by, soon forged far ahead, but we in the smaller cruisers knew that we should meet them in the lock at Meulan. George put on our second speed, and we were happy to find that we maintained our position well in the lead of the boats of our class—for our own sakes and for the sake of the flag we were flying.

The shores went swiftly by and, the excitement of the start once over, we settled down to the full enjoyment of the fresh morning air.

The banks of the Seine at this point remain distinctly suburban in character, for though Poissy is

Old Mill at Dennemont

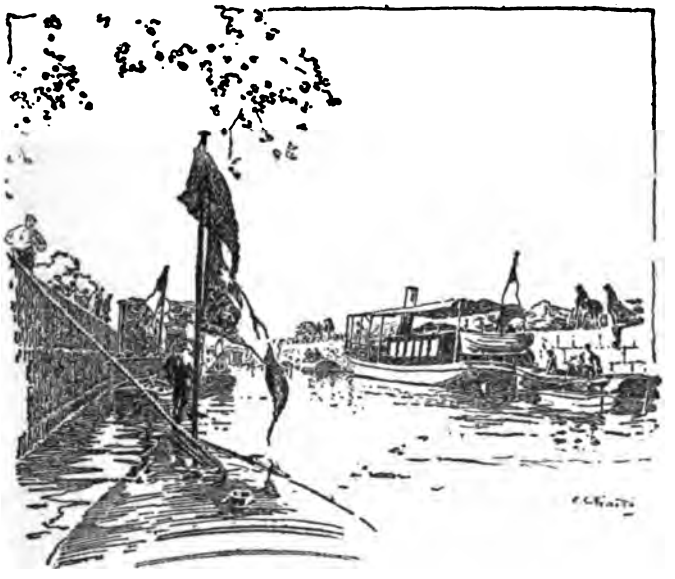
some distance from Paris, by the river, the railway has cut off so many of the loops that Poissy has been brought well into the environs. Villa gardens border

both shores, shaded by heavy foliage and decorated along the water's edge by many a rustic arbour, boat-house, and landing stage at which launches, row-boats, and yachts lie moored.

This pleasant Sunday morning, these gardens were alive with men and women in light summer clothes lounging in easy-chairs sipping their matinal *caf' au lait*, or preparing for a day of idleness upon the river.

Various and many are the types one sees; strange and wonderful is their raiment! To my mind, surely, the most amusing is the fisherman. The Parisian disciple of Izaak Walton is a true philosopher. Fishing with him is a pastime, not a sport. He rents, by the year, the right to plant two poles at a certain spot in the river, and to these he ties his broad, steady punt. Shaded by an awning, comfortably reclining in an ample wicker chair, with two or three rods fastened conveniently near at hand, he lolls by the hour and, when not dozing, watches the bobs with lack-lustre eyes. When, at very rare intervals, he *sees* a "bite," he seizes his rod with just as much alacrity as is commensurate with the languor of a hot mid-summer day. His better half, in a twin lounging chair, usually, if not always, accompanies

him, apoplectic in her tight stays and fanning herself violently as she reads the latest novel.



In the Lock at Meulan

Along the stretch to Triel, whose buttressed church spire, backed by rolling hills, now comes into sight, the river is gay with life. Bathers disport themselves in quiet pools along the shore or dive from spring-boards in front of tiny bathing houses; yachts, whose tall white sails gleam like wings, take one in fancy to

the shores of Lake Geneva; light racing shells go skimming by like dragon-flies upon the water; and our own little squadron itself adds much to the gaiety of the scene.

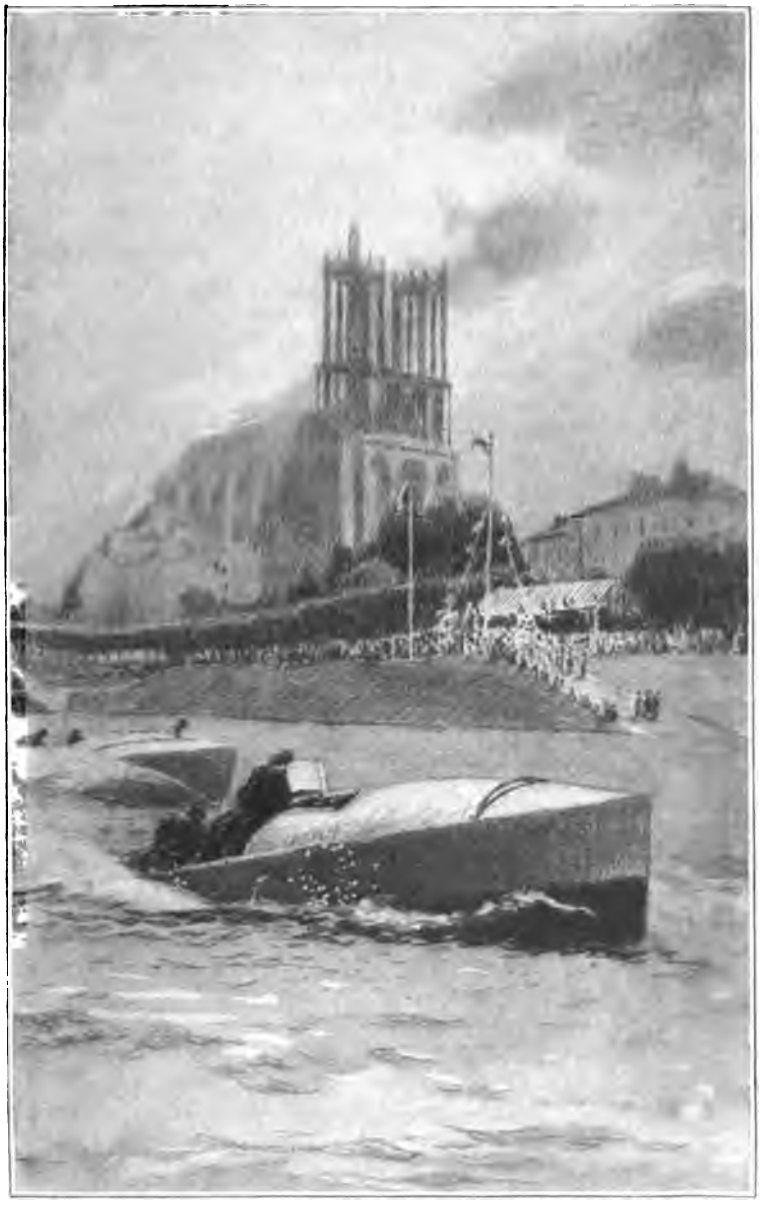
At one point, in fact, we note several autos speeding along the bank, our motor boats upon the river, and a balloon serenely sailing high above the hill tops—man's latest conquests of the three elements!

An island divides the river, and two large discs, one red, one white, indicate the channel: the white, of course, for the clear road; the red put there by the Touring Club of France for danger and shallow water.

Presently we lose the first of our competitors, for one of the boats drops out *en panne*, much to the disgust of its occupants. Our chauffeur takes the opportunity to moralise on the evils of speeding, for the little craft had obviously been overtaxing her motor to keep her place in the lead.

Now the long bridge of Meulan comes into view; to its right a fine château, with curtains of stately trees and a vista of lawns and parterres beyond.

Here we arrived at the first lock and found the fastest boats awaiting us there, so that practically all



The Races at Mantes

of us went into the big lock at once. This was our first opportunity for mutual inspection and criticism. Almost every one clambered up on top of the huge stone quays; then walked about comparing the various craft: the big white *Ondine*, with her crew of twelve, and her single male passenger on the promenade deck; the *Korrigan*, with its commodious cabin in which the committee was housed; the *Nautilus*, a new type of skid of which great things were expected in the races at Mantes. The *Voltigeur*, we all considered, embodied the best combination of comfort and speed, carrying in a hull only twelve metres long a forty-five horse-power motor, besides having accommodation for ten passengers. She fully justified our previsions, for she carried off the cup at Mantes, and the three first prizes of her class at Havre in the Grande Semaine Maritime.

When the flood-gates opened, there was a rush of departure. The big racers went on ahead, while we pleasure craft kept well together at a uniform rate of about sixteen or eighteen kilometres an hour.

The river now changed notably in character. Villas became few and far between, and in their places willows and cottonwoods, poplars and beeches,

bordered the water's edge. Signs of life became fewer and fewer. The French countryman is certainly not an amphibious animal. Even on this summer day, the only person we saw for quite a long time was a postman taking his Sunday swim, recognisable only by his official hat that he wore to ward off the sun's glances!

The next long bend in the river disclosed the beautiful, lace-like spires of Mantes cathedral, peeping above the horizon. We ate up the intervening distance in no time and soon had landed and were discussing an excellent and much-needed luncheon under the arbour at the Grand Cerf—an arbour such as Dagnan painted behind his Madonna in white—densely shaded by an arch of hornbeam through which a myriad tiny flecks of sunlight filtered.

After lunch we sauntered down to the river again, passing and admiring the great cathedral on our way.

The terraced shores of the Seine now presented a most animated appearance. Masts of flags, bits of bunting, and a brass band imparted a festive aspect, while a cheerful throng watched the town authorities, the delegates of the Yacht Club of France and kindred societies, under whose auspices the races were

Tower of St. Maclou, Mantes

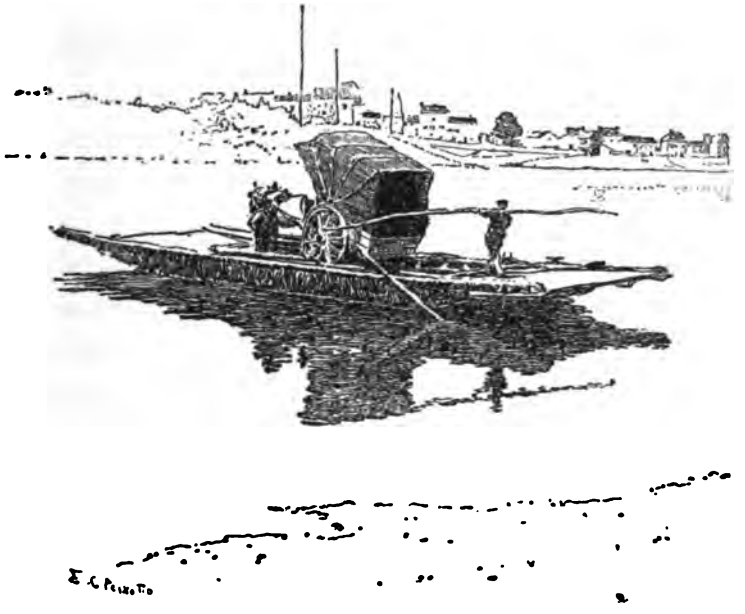
to be disputed, assemble in the grand stand, covered with the traditional red and white official awning.

There were to be four races, the first over a ninety-kilometre course for a challenge cup. The others were for boats of different categories—the usual thing—so we stayed only for the first race, for, as we had seen more inspiring events both in the north and south of France, and as this was a pleasure cruise and not a racing contest, we decided to go on and enjoy the beautiful afternoon on the river, joining the remainder of the fleet next morning at Les Andelys, where we intended to spend the night.

As we left Mantes we enjoyed another and final view of the cathedral spires, and of the Tower of St. Maclou, until a bend of the river effectually screened them from sight. Then to the left we noted a beautiful, deep park, then an open glade in which stood a stately château of the characteristic architecture of Henry II's time, high-pitched roofs, and pink brick walls faced with creamy stone—Rosny, Sully's birthplace, and a favourite residence of the unfortunate Duchesse de Berri.

At Rolleboise we passed the boat that marked the race-course end, and on the shore, from a platform

decked with the tricolour, the village authorities in attendance waved us greeting as we passed. We spied upon a villa near the church a huge American



The Ferry at Vetheuil

flag floating proudly on a pole. What did it mean? And who lived there? Questions, both of them, that none of us could answer.

As our boat cut its swift track through the water the country underwent a further transformation. Now

the rounded hillsides were patched by Norman thrift into crazy-quilts of rye and wheat and hay. Secluded villages spread their pink roofs in the sunshine. The river divided into several arms, surrounding numerous islands, whose pollard willows stood amid tall reeds and rushes, punctuated here and there with groups of poplars, soaring aloft like lofty church spires.

Here began one of the prettiest portions of the journey.

The river describes a great horse-shoe around a long hill that the railroad line traverses through a tunnel, and this whole loop, owing to its isolation from modern means of travel, retains that quaint provincial air so dear to artists and lovers of the olden time. So it has always had its colony of notables. At Vetheuil, the de Goncourts lived, and Claude Monet in his younger days; Paul and Victor Margueritte live there still, if I mistake not, and many a studio is dotted about the town. Zola dwelt at Bennecourt, with Monet as his neighbour, and pictured him, to their utter estrangement, as Claude in "L'Œuvre."

I have known this country for years past, for in my student days I spent several summers in Giverny,

just over the hills, and then, as well as since, have explored every nook of this pretty bit of countryside in all forms of conveyance—bicycle, motor car, and in an open carriage.

Roche Guyon, at the end of the horse-shoe, is one of the most attractive spots hereabouts. It has a fine old church, quaint old Gothic houses a-plenty, besides dwellings cut in the chalk cliffs. Here, too, is the great feudal castle of the La Roche Guyons and the La Rochefoucaulds, dominated by the ruins of a still older castle perched high upon the crags, commanding the river when this was the outpost of the French king's possessions in the days of the Conqueror.

Moisson, where Lebaudy builds his air-ships; Haute Isle, with its strange church built in the chalk cliffs; Méricourt, Bonnières glide by, and we come to the lock at Port Villez, a particularly slow and badly managed one, by the way. The bridge at Vernon lies just beyond, with, beside it, the ruins of an earlier bridge topped with a picturesque old crumbling house and a big twelfth-century châtelet—a donjon with four round towers, capped *en poivrière*.

Then succeeds a long, quiet stretch of water, so we decided to have dinner. And it was a good dinner,

too, I assure you, for George combines two apparently incompatible virtues, being an excellent cook as well as a good chauffeur. A little folding table was placed in front of our broad seat, and from lockers along the sides all sorts of dainty things appeared: table linen, crockery, glass ware, and no end of appetising eatables.

The sun was now setting, and we enjoyed its last rays and the glow in the sky and on the water. Then the long twilight settled down. The river grew wide and lonely, dotted with numerous islands and shoals grown with rushes. A single heron lazily rose and, flapping its heavy wings, sailed into a dark clump of trees. Old Norman farms, walled in secure against the mediæval marauder and looting man-at-arms—more dangerous far than any modern robber—slept in the still evening air with but a single light blinking in a window. Enfolding hills hemmed in the river, first on one side, then on the other, forcing it into those endless bends that render it so attractive.

But as darkness gathered fast, it became more and more difficult to find the channel even with the aid of our good Touring Club map. Presently, sure enough, our propeller caught and stirred up sand astern,

Château Gaillard

loosened itself, then caught again. We all moved forward as far as possible so as to lighten the stern, but even then the grating continued. We waited anxiously for deeper water, the prospect of spending the night in an open boat in the middle of the river being, to say the least, none too pleasant. After ten minutes or more, however, we cleared the sand-banks and sped along again in the gathering gloom.

The hills became higher and closer to the river bank, their silhouettes darker and more forbidding, until suddenly we spied a great and sombre mass against the sky, which even in the dim twilight we recognised as old Château Gaillard, Richard Cœur de Lion's "Saucy Castle," once the main outpost of his Norman territory.

We had reached our objective point for the night. We hailed the pontoon whence floated the flag of the Touring Club. After repeated calls, a man appeared with a lantern and we tied up next to the *Korrigan*, which we found had passed us on the opposite side of an island. What was our dismay to learn that its committee (whom we found still sitting over their after-dinner coffee in the shady court) had pre-empted every available room at the little Hotel Bellevue!

The proprietor, however, was an old friend of ours, and soon reassured us by saying that he could easily find us nice clean rooms in the village. So I slept that night in a peasant's bed, with a Virgin and several saints to watch over me and a collection of relations —most of them males in soldier clothes—to look down from over the mantel.

The Andelys are among the most interesting spots along the Seine. There are two towns: Le Petit Andelys on the river bank, dominated by bald chalk cliffs, on the highest of which is perched the massive ruin of the Château Gaillard, and Le Grand Andelys, a short mile inland.

In the morning, we walked up to the latter town and breakfasted at the ancient hostelry, the Grand Cerf—an old coaching inn of the early fifteenth century, still retaining all its characteristics: its court shut in by stables and carriage houses, its well with wrought-iron pump, its quaint spiral staircases and carved oak panelling, its *tambour* door of rich late-Gothic design, and best of all, its immense François I chimneypiece, with spit and all accessories in place. Then, after admiring the spacious church across the street and a number of picturesque old houses in the

town, we walked back to the river, and by eleven o'clock were off again.

Market-place, Pont de l'Arche

The *Korrigan* had left some time before us, and from time to time other boats hove into sight.

At noon we enjoyed the good luncheon that the landlord of the Bellevue had put up for us. We enjoyed, too, the ever-varying landscape: first, bare

chalk cliffs of fantastic shape, like ghostly ruins of prehistoric dwellings or towers and castles; then the river widening through broad and open fields, sheltered by rich, fat hill slopes with screens of trees along the water's edge, where peasants stood and nodded greetings or stared blankly at us as we passed. Here and there an old stone manor-house appeared, or farms with steep, half-timbered gables.

At Amfreville we found the most up-to-date lock along the river. It is run by electricity, generated by the falls of the *barrage*. The sluices open and shut as if by magic, with only one man to control them, and *he* simply presses a button—a wonderful labour-saving device, avoiding all the usual lengthy processes of twisting the double set of screws.

By two o'clock we reached Pont de l'Arche, where we landed to meet some friends who were summering there. It is a very quaint old Norman town of tumbledown houses and hilly, twisting streets. Its church, too, is peculiar in many ways and of very interesting design, for its south length is treated as the façade, and the chapel windows have been topped with pinnacles which are connected with each other and with the flying buttresses by a flam-

boyant screen of richest Gothic tracery. We also noted some rare old painted windows.

Place des Arts, Rouen

Then, down by the water again, we found the *Korrigan's* committee and had a friendly glass of wine at the hotel, where many an artist has left his souvenir on the panels of the dining room and café.

As I have before stated, rendezvous for all the boats had been set for four o'clock in the lock at Martot, about six kilometres beyond Pont de l'Arche, so that all could proceed together to Rouen. In good season we set off with the *Korrigan* and soon joined the remainder of the fleet. All waited in the lock until four o'clock, and then the flood-gate was closed and we looked about us to find that quite a number of the smaller craft were missing, laid up *en panne*, but still we made a goodly showing.

Here, again, as the flood-gates opened there was a scramble for departure and again a mad rush for exit and a burst of speed for place in line. This was the most determined race of the whole cruise, for no one wanted to arrive in Rouen at the tail end of the procession.

Despite our fleetness (for George was urging the motor to its full capacity), we took time to note the salient features of the landscape: a grand old monastery, built in fulfilment of a vow by Philippe Auguste, I think, now in ruins, with its mullioned windows open to the sky; then Elbeuf, an important manufacturing centre, spreading its smoky factory chimneys along a broad stone quay. After darting

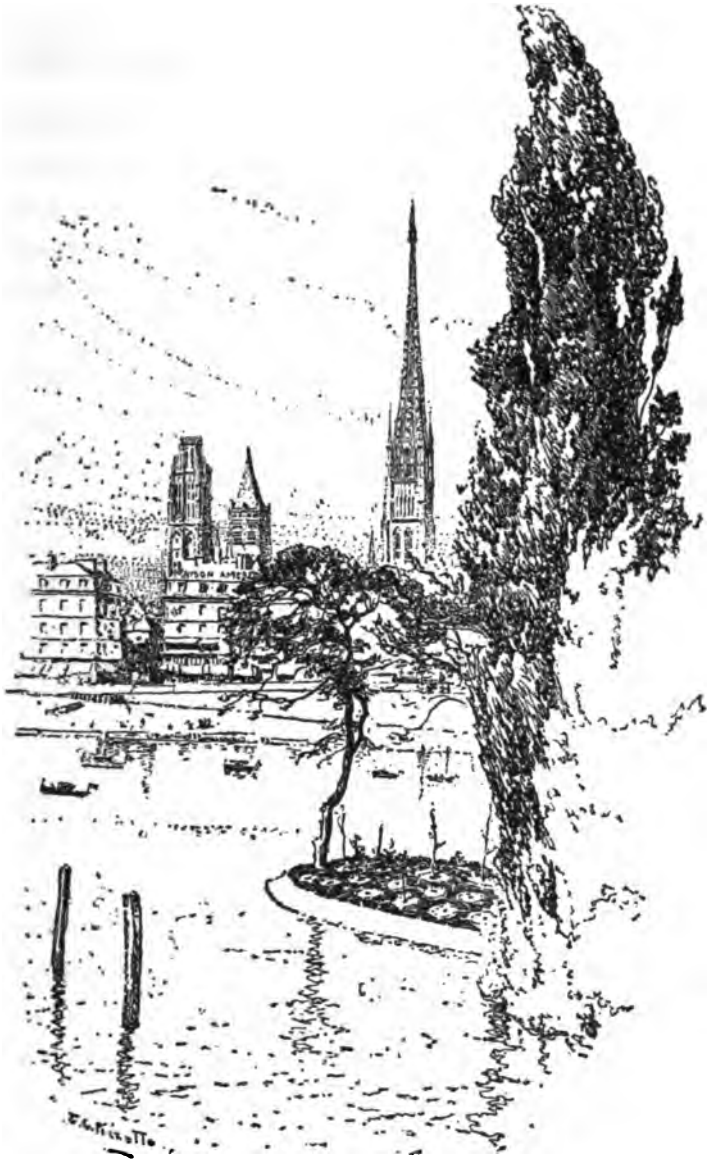
Rue de l'Epicerie, Rouen

under its big bridge, the river broadened again around wooded islands cut dark against pearly distances.

Fleecy clouds sped by overhead and added to the sense of motion. Islet after islet, town after town—Oissel, Tourville, Saint Etienne, Belbeuf—we passed, and still kept on. Because of numerous shoals, the channel here is very hard to find, so, following the *Korrigan's* lead (and this was one of the reasons for our all being together), in a long procession in Indian file we threaded passage after passage between rows of tall poplars and banks of willows until, on a distant hill, I caught sight of a faint blue spire, slender and lace-like—Notre Dame de Bons Secours—and I knew that the next bend of the river would disclose the towers of Rouen.

And there, to be sure, between files of tall poplars, standing like grenadiers on parade among the low, dense willows, we soon had glimpses of blue distances, of spires and hills.

The river grew more animated. We passed blustering tugs towing long lines of barges, and canal boats lay moored in the shade along the banks. Later the factories of Sotteville appeared upon the left; then we darted under the railway bridge and past the



Rouen from the Faubourg of Saint Sever

Faubourg of Saint Sever, and in a few moments were circling round, waiting for our opportunity to tie up at the pontoon of the Touring Club, where the committee was assembled. On the Pont Boieldieu and along the Quai de Paris a crowd of people watched the tactics of our little fleet as it landed.

A porter from the hotel took charge of our luggage, and in half an hour, after a summary brush up, we were seated at dinner on the *estrade* of the Hôtel d'Angleterre with all our fellow yachtsmen of the cruise.

Rouen is the fitting climax of this Seine voyage. It is a fitting climax, for that matter, of any voyage, for few towns on the Continent have preserved so many of their monuments and are so replete with interesting historic souvenirs—all of which is duly set forth in the guide-book.

The Seine beyond Rouen does not present the intimate charm of its upper course. It becomes a great river, with hills on one side and meadows on the other, describing long loops around promontories which dovetail into each other and force the river to meander in and out between them.

Between Rouen and Caudebec there is but one spot of real interest—the grand old Abbaye de

Jumièges, a Benedictine abbey, which has counted among its abbots some of the most illustrious prelates of France. Caudebec itself presents great natural possibilities and is a veritable mine to the lover of the picturesque. But after this point the river broadens to such an extent that objects on the flat banks are scarcely distinguishable from a small boat.

Certainly the real pleasure cruise lies in the portion above Rouen, and the charm of the voyage (as we found on the return trip) is heightened by the presence of a number of excellent hotels scattered along the river bank and affiliated with the Yacht Club of France, which vouches for their good behaviour just as the Automobile Club vouches for its affiliated hotels along the great highways.

For the benefit of those who wish to know, I would say that it is possible to hire motor boats at Maisons Laffitte.

II

UP THE OISE

ON a warm summer day how refreshing is a glimpse of the water; how clear and cool is the course of a running river! When the air on shore is stagnant and heavy, how untainted is the breeze that the motion of a boat creates! And do you know a pleasanter sound than the lap and licking of the wavelets as they run along the keel? Then, too, in a motor boat one is so comfortably installed, with pillows about, with lockers for eatables and drinkables close at hand, and with a gay striped awning to ward off the sun's hot rays. There are no bumps in the road and there is no end of opportunity for pleasant conversation to the soft accompaniment of the chug-chug of engine and propeller.

Was it a wonder, then, that, after our first cruise down the Seine, we looked anxiously for a chance to renew so pleasant an experience and to continue our exploration by navigating the Oise?

This latter river, after its long run down from Belgium, joins the Seine at Conflans, only a few miles from C——'s house, half-way between LaFrette and Poissy. About a fortnight after our first trip we were off again in the *Narcisse*, favoured by another

Conflans

bright morning. Herblay, with its pointed spire on the hill crest, was an old story, and so was Conflans, with its spreading harbour of canal boats and their attendant tugs, its old church where Sainte Honorine lies buried, its ruined donjon tower, and its pleached avenue along the river bank.

The Seine is extremely wide at Conflans, dyked as it is by a long weir, and, as you turn up into the Oise, the banks seem to close in about you, and shut you

in with an intimate embrace whose charm is enhanced by shady nooks along the poplar-fringed banks, and by the soft willows that trail their branches in the water. The Oise is just wide enough to give ample space for the boat to speed around the bends, and the banks are within close range enough to disclose all their charming details, recalling, in certain places, fair reaches on the Thames with their long, moist grasses and still shadows where pleasure boats lie moored.

But the human note is quite different. Where, except in France, would one see these women at the *lavoirs*, clacking their Gallic tongues as fast as their wooden paddles; these pretty villas and châteaux set in formal gardens adorned with *corbeilles* of begonias and geraniums; these little smiling villages that now and then disclose their pink roofs and pointed belfries as we glide by?

Pontoise is the first considerable town on the trip, and we reached it at about noon. It is an ancient burg, dating from the time of the Romans, and was for centuries a favourite residence of the early kings of France. Somewhere in the days of Joan of Arc the English took possession of the town by means of

a clever ruse of Talbot's. By covering his men with sheets, he enabled them to approach the walls in

Poplar-fringed Banks

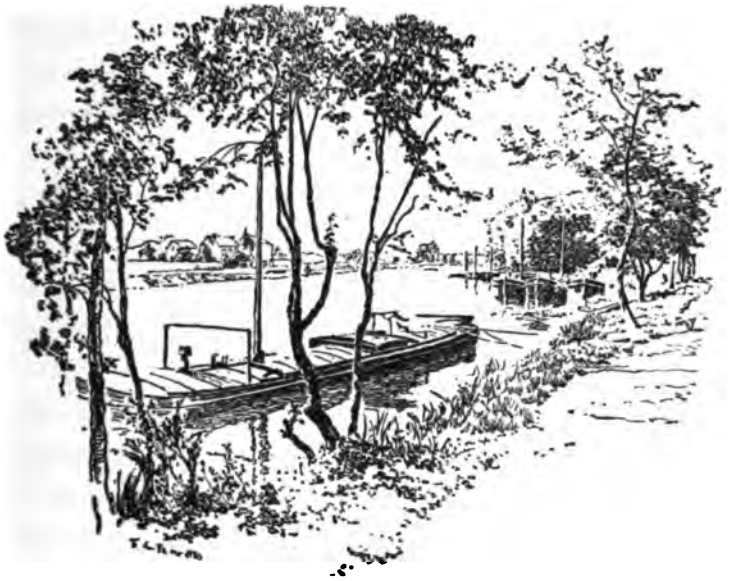
a heavy snow-storm, thus surprising the garrison into submission. Little remains of Pontoise's ancient glories, for it is to-day but a neat, well-built town—

a centre of river traffic with picturesque little ports where canal boats lie moored in the shade of wooded islands.

On the next stretch of the river lie Chaponval and Stors, with two fine châteaux; then Butry-Plage, so named for the little beach where the washerwomen beat their linen with wide paddles; then Auvers, long beloved by the artist craft. Daubigny has familiarised the world with its pastoral stretches of plain-land and its sweeping, billowy skies. Corot has painted the feathery willows by the river bank, and its picturesque church spire has served as *motif* for half a hundred pictures.

In the afternoon, on quiet stretches of water, we noted much of the canal-boat life: barges that come down from the north of France and from Belgium by canals and rivers and locks that Stevenson travelled in his "Inland Voyage." Any one who has read that rarely delightful book of travel will remember his accounts of these boats and their dry-land sailors, who carry families, habitations, and all their worldly belongings in these floating homes; and they are distinctly attractive homes that leave the prevailing impression upon the mind of clean linen curtains fram-

ing shining window-frames, of singing birds in cages, of flowers and plants in neat green pots, framing in big rudders, and the family gathered on deck, under



The River at Pontoise

awnings, eating their lunch *au frais*, with the gentle summer zephyrs fanning their faces. I know of many a harder lot than that these same bargemen lead.

Another phase of life—an unfailing source of amusement to us—was afforded by the fishermen,

such as we had seen on the Seine, lazily dangling their rods over the water, and I especially remember one individual in white, sitting on a comfortable stool, with three rods fastened to his boat. He had evidently lunched very well, and was lying back with his hands folded across his stomach, asleep, totally oblivious to bobs and tackle and the fish that come and go.

After skirting the northern limits of the forest of Montmorency, the river brought us in the late afternoon to L'Isle Adam. Here we moored the *Narcisse* at a convenient *lavoir* and landed to see what there was of interest in the town. For the famous château that once belonged to the Condés we looked in vain, for nothing remains of it but a ruined terrace. But the town is pretty and repays a visit. A fine old stone bridge—the Pont Caboullet—here crosses the river divided by islands and leads over to the railroad station, whence a beautiful avenue and promenade, Le Patis, gains the wooded hills and forest beyond. Back in the boat again, a short little run brought us at about dinner-time to Beaumont-sur-Oise.

Here we decided to spend the night at an inn with the high-sounding name of Hôtel des Quatre-Fils-

Aymon. After dinner we visited the church and enjoyed the long summer twilight on the fine promenade that affords so extended a view of the Oise valley.

The Oise at L'Isle Adam

Next morning we made a stop at St. Leu d' Esserent that well repaid us. The splendid church is one of the finest early Gothic edifices in France, pronounced by Viollet-le-Duc the extreme limit of daring attained by the twelfth-century architects. The east end, which is of admirable construction, towers

splendidly upon its hill top, flanked by Romanesque belfries and supported by flying buttresses of rare hardihood of design. The whole group of buildings is of great interest to architects, for adjoining the west façade there are remains of an ancient priory, with a machicolated gateway, while in the near-by alleys are some curious early Renaissance houses.

It is but a short run from St. Leu to Creil, and we arrived in the latter town by noon. Here we moored the *Narcisse* and went to the hotel and arranged for the night.

It may be of interest to give some description of our rooms. The Touring Club of France—a very large and influential organisation—has lately advocated sanitary rooms at a moderate cost in all provincial hotels. The idea makes a distinct appeal to any one who knows the old-fashioned, musty rooms of the smaller French hotels, with their heavy, wadded hangings and curtains, their dusty carpets and dark, uncertain corners. These new rooms, or "chambres T. C. F.," as they are called, remind one, in a way, of a hospital ward. The walls are painted white or some pale colour. There is a white enamelled bed, a metal washstand, a bureau, a few simple chairs,

and a table. Everything can be washed clean. In each of the recent Salons du Mobilier at Paris, the

The Church of St. Leu d'Esserent

Touring Club has offered special prizes for the best designs for rooms of this type, with the result that these "chambres T. C. F." are now done by some of the leading Parisian decorators and have become

really attractive in the larger hotels. Such were our rooms at Creil.

The town, though very ancient, Credulium to the Romans, is, on the whole, uninteresting, though the turreted houses along the Oise and the old church behind them compose a very pretty picture.

We went out the main road to Clermont, to the old church of Nogent-les-Vierges—picturesquely placed on an eminence. It is a splendid pile of the earliest Gothic period, but for many tourists its chief interest will lie in a very quaint old legend connected with it.

Away back somewhere in the middle ages, two Irish girls, Maura and Bridget, suffered martyrdom near by, and were buried in the cemetery of Nogent which adjoins this church. Toward the end of the twelfth century, a peasant lost a black cow that passed the night lying on the tomb of these virgins. When the owner found the animal in the morning, he was dumfounded to see that the side of the cow that had rested on the tomb had turned perfectly white. The miracle was noised abroad, and people flocked to see the animal, and the place became an object of pilgrimage. Some time after, the very same cow again

strayed away from home and passed the night in the same graveyard. Next morning it was again found

Pont Sainte Maixence

lying on the grave of the virgins and when it rose to its feet, what was the amazement of all beholders

to find that both sides were now entirely white! The fame of this miracle spread through all France, and thousands of people came to see the cow and be cured of their ills. Nogent became henceforth Nogent-les-Vierges, and relics of the two virgin-saints were placed in a shrine within the church where they may be seen to this day!

On our return to Creil we met by appointment our friend Gaston B——, a painter who lives in the little town of Rieux, about four miles up the river. The *Narcisse* soon took us to his home, and the memory of the evening passed there remains ever fresh. The pretty, half-timbered house, mirroring itself in the river; the vast studio and its pictures; the stone dining room, with its quaint Breton table service, and best of all, the gay and intimate conversation that flowed about the board, compose a treasured recollection.

We made an early start next morning, but not too early to have a parting salutation from our friends at Rieux as we passed.

The Oise now became very pretty—a quiet, pastoral stream with low banks and, to the south, the wooded hills of the Forêt d' Hallate so often awakened by the huntsman's horn.

There are amusing towns hereabouts: Pont Sainte Maixence trails its timbered houses along the water front and its *lavoirs* and queer old "Anchor" inn; then come Sarrou and Rhuis and Verberie, whose Norman church tower proclaims its antiquity. In this sleepy spot—a mere village to-day—Charles Martel died and Charlemagne built a palace to replace the one occupied by Chilpéric and Clotaire. All this Oise country teems with reminiscence of the early days of French history.

Next we passed St. Ouen, with its two châteaux by the river, and Jaux, with its primitive ferry running on a cable. Then the forest of Compiègne begins to border the river to the right, and soon we sighted the towers of the town, favourite residence of royalty from the time of the Merovingian kings.

The morning was too perfect, however, and the river too pretty to leave, so we continued along, past the town and among wooded islands, to the junction of the Oise and Aisne. Here we found the Oise much narrower and more rapid. Just as Stevenson ended his "Inland Voyage" at Noyon feeling the inadaptability of the Oise for a canoe below this point, so we realised its unfitness for a motor boat above its confluence with the Aisne.

So we steered up the latter winding stream as far as Rethondes, returning for lunch under the willows at Choisy-au-Bac. After lunch we retraced our tracks to Compiègne, where we made fast before two o'clock.

We ordered a carriage at the hotel and half an hour later were off across the forest to Pierrefonds, by the main road, which is the shortest. Our driver proved quite a character. He was dressed *en postillon*, with a tall hat narrowing at the top and ornamented with a broad gold galloon. He was a native of Compiègne, and regaled us with many a story of the brilliant fêtes held there under Napoleon III. He himself had been employed about the palace, and remembered the Empress so well and with such reverence that in spite of thirty years of the Republic his imperial convictions were still as strong as ever.

We literally gasped as we emerged from the forest, and the great castle of Pierrefonds appeared above the tree-tops.

What a vision it is! What an evocation of a bygone age! Its towers and battlements and high-pitched roofs, its broad, deep moats, its barbican, its great screens of curtain-walls glittering in the sun-

The Castle of Pierrefonds

shine, evoke the days of the *preux chevaliers*, of the early Capetian monarchs, of Godfrey de Bouillon and the first Crusaders.

Some, of course, may object to Viollet-le-Duc's restorations and the renovated aspect of the fabric, but it is decidedly a question if their point is well taken, when we stop to consider that, had the castle remained as it was, it would to-day have been but a mere mass of ruin like Coucy or the Château Gaillard.

A careful visit to the interior is of the highest import. The rooms have been restored and redecorated, and afford an interesting picture of what life in a great *château fort* was like. Many of the original bits of sculpture and shaft-heads have been unearthed and carefully arranged as a sort of museum, while their places in the walls are taken by replicas.

We drove back to Compiègne in the twilight, through avenues of noble oaks and beeches, past the Etang de St. Pierre, where the "meet" takes place and where the stag often seeks refuge from the dogs before the death. We passed, too, through the old village of the Vieux Moulin, entirely built of the same heavy stone as Pierrefonds, and quenched our thirst

at its attractive inn where our ices and lemonades, besides beer for the coachman, amounted, I remember, to the extraordinary sum of a franc and a half!

We spent the remainder of the evening in Compiègne, at the Café de la Cloche, writing, looking at the papers, and watching the life in front of the Hôtel de Ville. What a charming old building it is, recalling so strongly the city halls of Flanders, with its *tourelles* and *clochetons*, its canopied niches filled with statues looking down on Joan of Arc astride her horse, seeming to defy them all with her sword!

Next morning we visited Compiègne and its palace, which is too well known to need description here. The town repays careful investigation, however, retaining many of its quaint old houses, a city gate or two, the tower where La Pucelle was held prisoner (for you will remember the Burgundians captured The Maid under the walls of Compiègne), and several fine churches—to say nothing of curiosity shops where real little treasures may be found for little or nothing.

By noon we were off again, homeward bound.

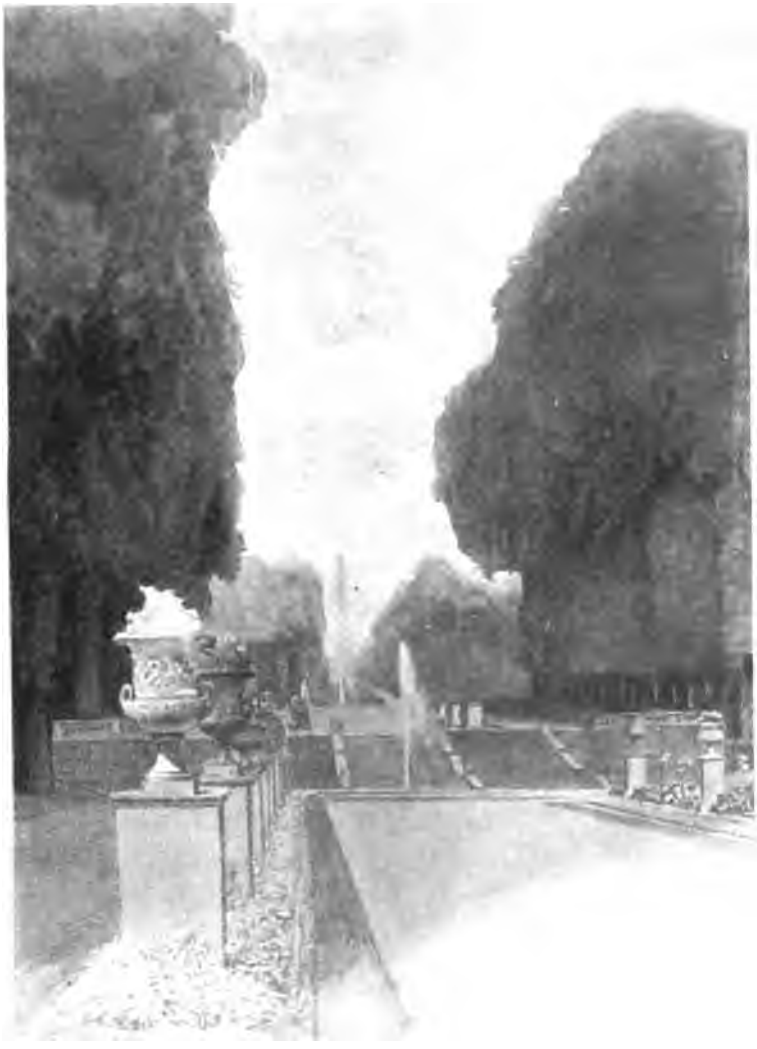
LITTLE JOURNEYS FROM PARIS

LITTLE JOURNEYS FROM PARIS

DURING the summer months the visitor in Paris is apt to find hot weather—not so hot as the summer of our Eastern States, but warm enough to be very fatiguing for a long day of sight-seeing. When evening comes, instead of dining in a stuffy restaurant on the Boulevard and spending the later hours in an equally stuffy theatre, how much pleasanter it is to dine under branches of soft green foliage, in sight of sparkling water, in a theatre where actors and audience are the Parisians themselves, not *blasé* international tourists! I do not mean to take you to the Café des Réservoirs at Versailles, or to the celebrated Tête Noire and Pavillon Bleu at St. Cloud, for these places, though pleasantly situated and renowned for their excellent *cuisine*, are very like the city restaurants, and in them you find the same fashionable throng.

But, on a warm evening, go to the Louvre and take a little river boat down the Seine. You pass the Eiffel Tower, the Trocadéro, and the miniature reproduction of Liberty Enlightening the World; and further on you shoot under the beautiful Pont du Point-du-Jour, with its double line of superposed arches, and finally wooded hillsides rejoice your aching eyes. A delicious breeze fans your heated temples as the boat smoothly cuts the silent water. A halt or two and then you thread a passage between two islands and the boatman calls "Bas-Meudon."

Here you may descend and choose among the restaurants lined up on the river bank. I prefer the "Pêche Miraculeuse," with its long upper terrace, and its spotless little white tables all in a row, flower-bedecked. How often have I sat at the end table and watched the sunset dying on the distant hills, the river reflecting the rosy blushes of the sky, and the little boats silently cutting their way through the unruffled water! How often have I enjoyed the people—the *bon bourgeois* out with his wife and children; the girl from Montmartre breathing the only country air that ever reaches her flattened lungs;



The Park, Saint Cloud

the literary and artistic lights of France enjoying their *matelote* and *friture de Seine!*

One night, as we climbed the stairs to the balcony, I spied my old Academy professor, Jules Lefèbvre, playing backgammon in a corner with a gray-haired vis-à-vis, whose bright-red rosette of the Legion of Honour matched his own. Soon another distinguished-looking man joined them, and then another. As we watched the boats pull up at the landing, it seemed as if each one deposited yet another well-known figure, each coat-lapel blooming with its little red button. Madame was on hand to meet each guest, and all greeted her as old friends should—one affectionately patting her on the back, another kissing her merrily on each cheek. They were like boys out for a lark.

When the company had finally assembled, they seated themselves at a table specially decorated in their honour. There were Bonnat, Laurens, Chapu, Lefèbvre, Cormon—professors at the Beaux-Arts, Members of the Institute—but all forgetful of their honours, with their knees under the same board—*en bon camarade*—with that spirit of good fellowship and that lack of jealousy that distinguish the truly

great artist. Merry jests and laughs rang round the table; "ahs" and "ohs" went up as Madame

The Marchandes

drew the corks and the knives and forks began to rattle.

Down below, on the bank of the river, a poor fiddler tuned his plaintive melody; the tables on the

porch one by one filled up with men and women in light summer gowns. The sunset died along the river, and, as the evening closed in, the lights of the men's cigars glowed red in the deepening twilight.

After dinner take the little *funiculaire* railway up to the Pavillon de Bellevue on the height above—a luxurious café where a good orchestra adds its rhythmic measures to the merriment of a fashionable crowd. Here, as you sip your coffee and *chartreuse*, you can enjoy a marvelous panorama of the myriad lights of Paris twinkling in the still night air.

A number of charming excursions can be made in the country west of Paris: to Ville d'Avray, nestled in the quiet woods, the still pools and fluffy willows strongly reminiscent of Corot, who here painted many of his poetic early morning landscapes; to St. Germain-en-Laye, with a magnificent château and a terrace, commanding an incomparable view, to which, however, Louis XIV objected because he could see in the distance the tower of the Cathedral of St. Denis, his final resting-place; to La Malmaison and its tragic souvenirs of Josephine, and to the church at Rueil near by, where she lies buried; to Marly-la-Machine, where the great device that

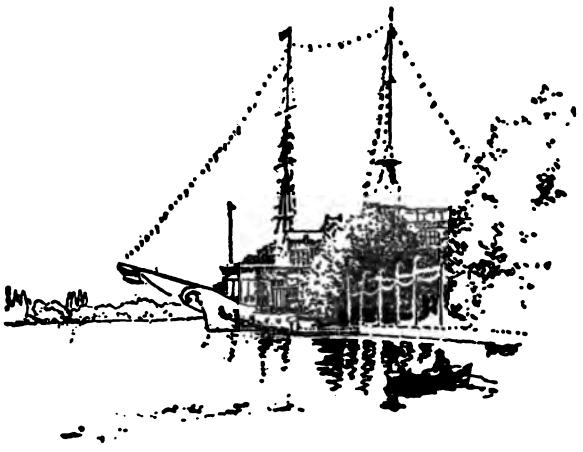
pumped water from the Seine to the gardens of Versailles may still be seen; to Louveciennes, with its memories of La Dubarry—all of which may be combined in a day's motor drive, lunching on the terrace at St. Germain.

Just beyond the Bois de Boulogne, on the Seine, after it has made its wide loop to pass St. Cloud, lies Suresnes—a town of no attraction in itself, but most entertaining on account of the life one sees there.

Choose a fine day when there have been races in the Bois. At four or five in the afternoon take a seat at one of the many cafés—a seat from which you have a good view of the bridge which spans the river.

The scene is most animated. Pedestrians crowd the sidewalks; bicyclists and automobilists speed by in the strange, uncouth garb which the French have affected for these sports; carriages and electric cars rattle and bang in the roadway. Every moment there is a threatened collision. Mothers frantically grasp their offspring from under the whizzing wheels, stout men puff and perspire as they cross the crowded thoroughfare, chauffeurs toot their blatant horns, and every few minutes a bridal procession in carriages goes laughing and singing down the street.

Among the humble classes in Paris, an essential part of the marriage ceremony is a long drive through the country, stopping at various taverns to dance and refresh the inner man. Suresnes is a favourite goal



Casino and Lake

for these excursions, and its cafés are each provided with *salles de noces*—large, cold rooms with rows of chairs lined up along the walls and a cracked piano in one corner.

The line of carriages stops in the crowded street; the wedding party alights, ill at ease in broad daylight, in badly fitting dress-suits and tightly laced cor-

sages. The groom looks very conscious in his silk hat and white gloves, with a bunch of orange-blossoms tied with dangling white ribbons in his buttonhole. The bride is in white satin, with the classic veil and orange-blossoms—bought ready-made on the Boulevard Sébastopol at prices varying from twenty-five francs upward. The whole party is red-faced, very lively, and on the verge of being livelier still. They are immediately assailed by an army of venders, selling little tinselly, gay-coloured favours with which the men decorate themselves and the ladies. Then the whole party stumbles up-stairs, and we hear them in the next room, ordering a *tournée* and feeing the poor old musician to play a jiggety waltz on the worn-out piano.

Some of the party step out on the porch to watch the crowd below. A beggar lifts up his voice in plaintive melody; three men in Zouave uniform, gilt-bronzed from head to foot, take heroic poses—"reconnoitring," "charge bayonets," "wounded"; a precocious youngster imitates Paulus of the Scala, his threadbare silk hat aslant on the back of his head, his face contorted into strange grimaces. Women pass from café to café selling tiny bunches of the first

lilies-of-the-valley and fresh spring flowers arranged in formidable cabbage-bouquets with tall ribbon-grasses springing from the centre; boys in white cap and apron pass from table to table offering hot *gaufrettes*—a kind of waffle. The bridal party invests largely in all the hucksters' wares, until their white-lined carriage is quite overladen. I have often wondered at the groom's improvidence until I called to mind that there are but three events between baptism and death in this same man's life: his first communion, when he wears a knot of white ribbon on his arm; his *service*, when he dons his soldier's uniform; his marriage, when he wears the orange-blossom in his button-hole.

At Robinson's

Little journeys northward from Paris take one to St. Denis, thence on to Enghien-les-Bains, situated on a pretty lake, well and favourably known to all the *bon bourgeois* of Paris who flock there in summer to hear the music, dance, and play the *petits chevaux*

in the Casino, arranged as a great ship, whose prow juts far into the water, whose upper decks serve as café terraces, and whose spars and rigging afford ample excuse for a liberal display of bunting.

A little farther on lies Montmorency, another favourite summer resort of the Parisians, beloved by them on account of its beautiful forest. How different these French forests are from our virgin forests of America! In them one never feels lost from human habitation. There is a certain wildness, to be sure, but it is a wildness tamer than that of our savage woods, and, ever and anon, one comes without surprise upon a well-paved road or a mile-post carefully designating the cross-roads. While the older trees are magnificent, an interloping younger growth, the birth of constant cuttings, allows the sunlight to play merrily through the fresh green leaves.

At Montmorency is the Hermitage, once the residence of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who here, in the leafy shadows, wrote his tirades against *bosquets* and statues, vases and *parterres*, and all the primness of architectural gardening made fashionable by Le Nôtre.

The list of these little journeys might be indefinitely prolonged, even in this northern and western

district. Ecouen, with its château of the Montmorencys; Senlis and Meaux and their beautiful cathedrals; Chantilly and its palace; the walled town of Crécy—each more than repays a visit.

But I wish to point out a little valley to the southward, not so rich, perhaps, as many another in historic souvenirs, but truly pastoral and pictorial, and, though within easy access of the capital, as rural and peaceful as the choicer spots of many a far-away province.

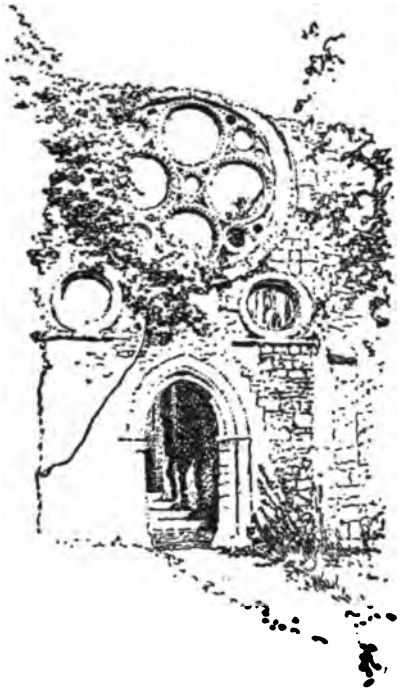
When you are jaded with museums and asphalt pavements, go over to the Gare de Sceaux and hie you to the valley of Chevreuse. Just beyond the city walls, at the foot of a wooded hill near Sceaux, you will find "Robinson"—a unique place for luncheon or dinner—in summer thronged with a merry crowd. It is a favourite resort of the Latin Quarter students and their *petites amies*, who frequent its woods bestriding trotting donkeys or lunch in little pavilions built in the branches of great chestnut-trees, to which the viands are hoisted in baskets.

Of the great château built by Colbert after Perrault's designs and decorated by Le Brun, nothing remains save a portion of the gardens laid out by Le Nôtre.

Beyond Sceaux lie the pretty towns of Massy, Palaiseau, and Orsay, with handsome villas set in beautiful gardens. Then we reach the real country.

Gif holds many a pleasant association for me, for at the old Abbaye de Notre Dame du Val de Gif, I have spent many a happy evening. The property of Madame Juliette Adam, it was leased from her by a cousin of mine for a number of years. It lies on a sloping hillside, adjoining the woods at the upper end, then falling in gentle terraces down to the little river, the Yvette, that waters this valley of Chevreuse. Its gardens are full of charm: apple orchards and beds of old-fashioned flowers; grottoes where virgins stand enshrouded in shadow, and, on the lower lawn, the ivy-clad ruins of the twelfth century abbey church. Under the trees that grow in its nave we took our afternoon tea. Near by in a subterranean chamber, closed with a huge stone, refractory nuns were confined for penance. The house is picturesque and rambling, its main feature being an immense drawing-room, recently added by the owner, and in every way worthy of the last woman to keep alive the traditions of the old French *salons*.

St. Remy and Chevreuse lie but a little way beyond, and here the valley is prettiest. The walks



Ruins of Abbey

are charming. Chevreuse beckons with its crumbling castle; Dampierre with its magnificent château, the home of the Duc de Luynes; Vaux-de-Cernay with

its ruined abbey, and Cernay-la-Ville with its artistic inn, crowded each summer by a colony of landscape painters enamoured of the scenery made famous by Pelouse.

Pushing but a bit farther on, we reach the northern limits of the forest of Rambouillet and the main road to Chartres which we shall follow later on.

UNFREQUENTED CHATEAUX NEAR FONTAINEBLEAU

UNFREQUENTED CHATEAUX NEAR FONTAINEBLEAU

MELUN is but a short hour southward from Paris and the first stop of the fast trains for the Riviera. It is on the northern confines of the Forest of Fontainebleau, and the stags, pursued by the pack of baying hounds, often make their last stand in the Bois de la Rochette which adjoins Melun to the south.

Should you alight from the train in autumn at about four o'clock, you would surely wonder, as you glanced at the long provincial street with its single trolley tracks, why so goodly an array of handsome traps and motor cars were drawn up before the station, and why so smart a crowd of footmen stood anxiously scanning the crowd for the master's familiar face. Presently the carriages would whisk off in different directions, some down under the railroad bridge toward Vives-Eaux and Fortoiseau, some up the long street and

out over the plains to the north toward Vaux-Praslin, others to follow along the banks of the Seine to La Rochette on one side or Vaux-le-Pénil on the other.

Did you take one of these carriages sent six miles across country by some kind host to meet you, you would now follow the clear white road up over the plateau, skirting broad fields of stubble where pheasants would occasionally run out from under the hedgerows or a rabbit scamper across the road. You would note, too, the *abris* where the guns take cover during the shoot, when the "beaters" drive up the game. Great straw-stacks—*bonshommes de paille*, thatched with that deft nicety so characteristic of everything that the French farmer does—swell their comfortable rounded masses in colonies of six or eight against the setting sun, and presently you whirl through the pretty little town of Dammarie-les-Lys with its rose-embowered walls and ivy-clad gateposts, topped with vases of geraniums, only to find yourself once more out upon the broad plain which now sweeps downward toward a bend of the Seine.

A turn, and you enter a double avenue of lofty trees, a century or two old, and at its end see a high wrought-iron grille, one gate of which stands invit-

ingly open. Great stone retaining-walls, topped with ivy, extend limitless on either hand, while beyond the

The Roadway describes a Broad Circle

grille a *tapis vert* stretches up to the château, gleaming cream-white among the clipped trees. The roadway describes a broad circle, and as you draw up

under the glass marquise a tall footman runs down the carpeted steps to open the carriage door. A great wood fire greets you in the big drawing-room, whose windows cheerily face on the one hand the *tapis vert*, and on the other the broad expanses of the formal garden.

With what pleasure I recall the dinners in the hospitable dining-room; the evenings in the library with its dim array of aged volumes, its rare lithographs and *sanguines* by Boucher and his school glowing from the walls, while Holbein's portrait of Erasmus peeped from a corner as we sat about the glow of the great chimneypiece. And the alcove-beds upstairs with their faded chintz hangings, and the wall panellings of Trianon gray, enlivened with oval old-time paintings above the doors and mantelshelves! . . .

I

VAUX-LE-VICOMTE

BECAUSE of an extended residence in Fontainebleau, we had known these châteaux for years. To us they were an old story. Therefore, it was a constant source of surprise that so few of our friends had even heard of them. In fact, so little are they known that, instead of calling them "Unfrequented Châteaux," I might almost allude to them as unknown châteaux.

Of these châteaux about Melun, the most important historically as well as artistically is Vaux-le-Vicomte. While Louis XIV was still contenting himself with the comparative luxury of his palaces at St. Germain and Fontainebleau as they then existed, his chancellor, Fouquet, having carefully administered the affairs of state largely to his own profit, determined to build for himself a château that would eclipse anything his royal master then possessed. He appointed Le Vau his architect and Le Brun his artist-in-chief, and with

their help perfected a magnificent set of plans which cost sixteen million francs (an enormous sum for those days) to execute. When Le Vau's work was finished, Le Brun's began. He assembled at Vaux a veritable army of artisans and artists, and established himself there with his wife like a grand seigneur in an entire apartment on the first floor. A tapestry factory was established near by, at Maincy, where the elaborate hangings for the rooms and for the furniture were woven.

Le Nôtre, then at the beginning of his career, was next called in to plan the gardens, and they were his first great opportunity. Posterity has united in saying that he made the most of it. Hundreds of workmen changed this barren plain to a garden of enchantment, replete with every device that Le Nôtre's imagination bequeathed to the French school of landscape architects.

If we consider the amount of artistic effort expended in the construction and decoration of Vaux, in the architecture of its gardens and the making of its furnishings; if we stop to consider that Fouquet was a renowned collector of pictures, tapestries, statues, and rare prints; that his numerous portraits were

graven in steel by twenty different engravers; that he collected coins and had numerous medals struck for himself—we can understand why he was called the Mæcenas of his day and why he merited the title.

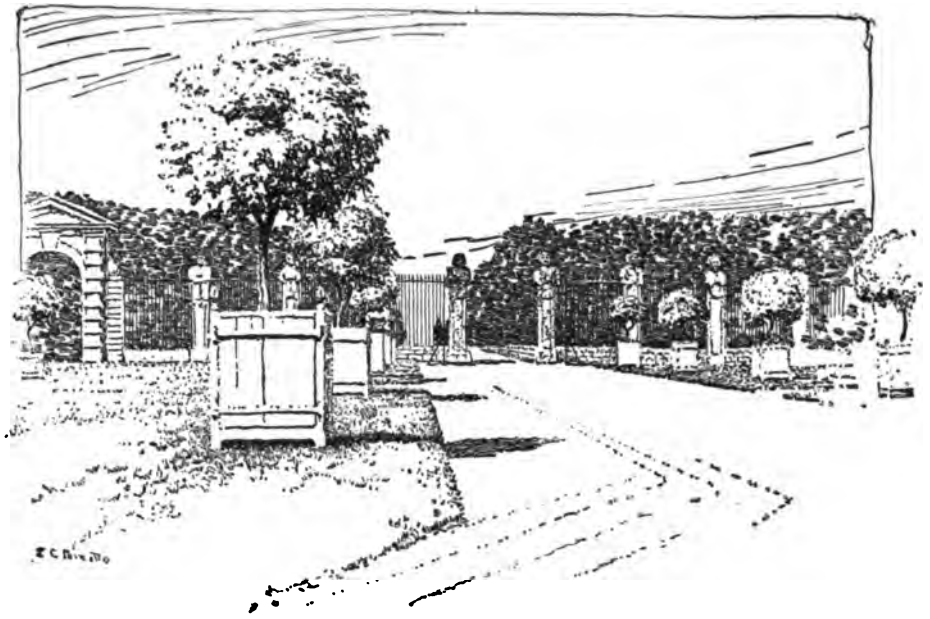
But alas, his "fool's paradise," as it was called, proved his undoing!

When the château was finished he invited a great party, including Monsieur and his bride Henrietta of England, and a series of brilliant fêtes was inaugurated. But Fouquet's ambition stopped at nothing short of entertaining the King himself, and of showing his sovereign what the combined genius of such a galaxy of stars as Le Vau, Le Brun, Le Nôtre, and Vatel, his ever-to-be-remembered chef, could accomplish.

His ambition was finally gratified, for the King consented to come. Such extravagant fêtes as those then organised had never before been known. In the bosquets of the garden the guests found booths where dainties and rare perfumes and gifts were distributed; men whose propensity for gambling was well known, on awakening in the morning, found purses filled with gold upon their dressing-tables. The King was disgusted at this vulgar show of wealth, and jeal-

ous, too, if the truth be told, and while he exclaimed, "What foolish extravagance!" he noted, with all too evident irritation, Fouquet's device carved everywhere about the house: a squirrel running up a tree with the motto, "Quo non ascendam?"

The crowning glory of these fêtes was the performance by Molière and his troop of "Les Fâcheux," especially written for the occasion. It was given in the gardens by starlight. When the guests were seated, Molière appeared without make-up or costume, and apparently was dumfounded at seeing the King. He apologised for neither having his players with him nor a play to give. Just then there rose from the waters of a fountain near by a nymph in a shell. She gracefully stated that she had come from her home in the water's depths to behold the greatest monarch the world had ever seen. Started in this flattering key, this dainty conceit of a play went on to praise Louis at the expense of his courtiers, satirising them as *les fâcheux*—the bores—with their hobbies, their sycophancy, and foibles, and pleasing the King so extravagantly that he called up and congratulated the author, even suggesting a new character to be introduced—the *grand veneur* and his interminable stories of the hunt.



The Entrance Gates, Vaux

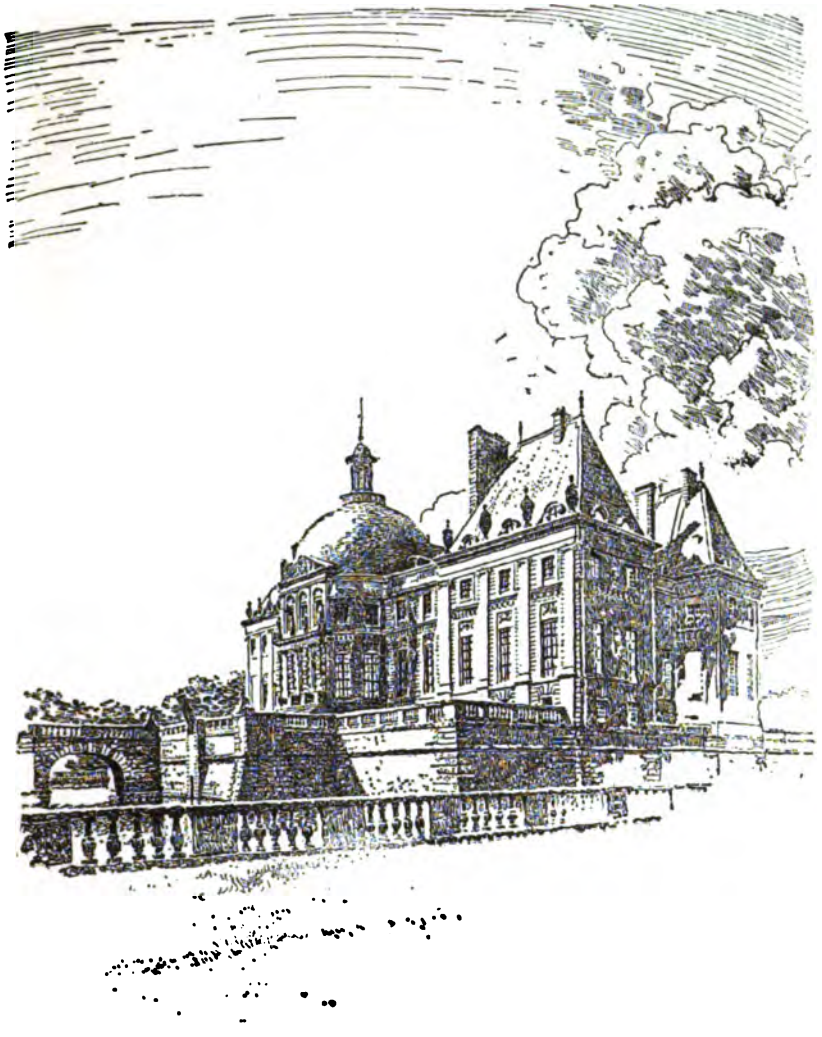
From that evening Molière was assured of the lasting favour of his King, and it marked the turning-point of his career from troubles and petty jealousies to fame and favour. La Fontaine, also one of Fouquet's pensioners, was among the spectators that evening, and his "*Songe de Vaux*" was written in memory of the occasion:

> Tout combattit à Vaux pour le plaisir du roi:
> La musique, les eaux, les lustres, les étoiles.

But the King amid his pleasures could not forget his jealousy, which reached its culmination when he heard that Fouquet had dared raise his eyes to the royal favourite, Mademoiselle de la Vallière. Eighteen days later the chancellor was arrested by the King's command and sent to prison for life.

Vaux passed into the hands of the Duc de Praslin, and still is often called by his name, Vaux-Praslin.

Unlike the châteaux that have become the property of the state to be made into museums, cold, uninhabited, and uninhabitable, Vaux retains to the utmost degree its pristine magnificence. Owned until very recently by a man of great wealth, who had the respect of its traditions, it has lost none of its beauty.

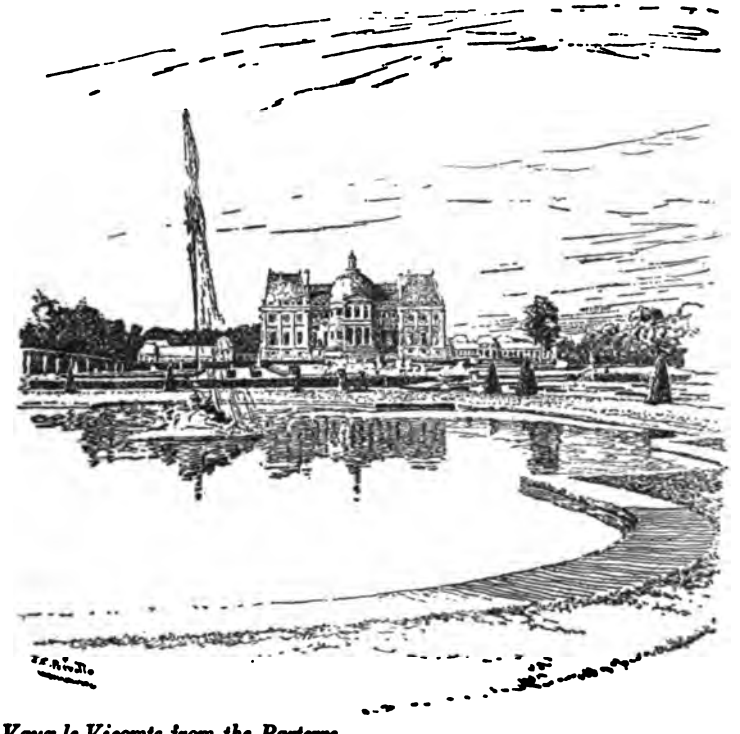


Vaux-le-Vicomte

Its incomparable gardens stretch green in the sunlight, spreading their parterres and *boulingrins*, their fountains, statues, and great *pièces d'eau*, almost to the limits of the horizon. Armies of gardeners trim the pleached hedges, plant the elaborate borders, and remove every stray leaf from the gravel walks. It is the acme of formal French gardening.

The estate is separated from the county road by an imposing grille, with stone posts in the form of Hermes some thirty feet high. From this the main avenue, flanked by orange trees in tubs, slopes down between the *basse cour* and conservatories on one hand, and the carriage-houses and garages on the other, to the drawbridge. The whole château stands nobly raised on a great stone terrace reflecting itself on all sides in the waters of a broad moat. One mounts a wide rise of steps to the vast stone vestibule with its full equipment of liveried footmen in silk stockings and gold lace. From this vestibule the main *salons* lead off on either hand, with the beautiful paintings by Mignard and the two Le Bruns still glowing in alcove and lunette and in the coffers of the ceilings. The hangings, the furniture, wood-work, and panelling—much of it of the original period—are still fairly perfect in style, showing

the faults, the pomposity, if you will, but the grave dignity of that courtly epoch of Le Grand Monarque.



Vaux-le-Vicomte from the Parterre

The great feature of the interior is a vast stone rotunda capped with the dome that forms so conspicuous a part of the garden façade. This *salle* serves as

connecting link between the house and garden, for half of it is embedded in the château while the other half projects out of doors. Its circumference is equally divided by doors and windows, the doors leading into various adjoining drawing-rooms, the windows opening to the ground and affording beautiful vistas of the garden.

It is only on stepping from this rotunda out upon the terrace, from which a long flight of steps leads down, that the splendour and spread of Le Nôtre's garden architecture count for their full value. The planting is, of course, denser and richer than in Fouquet's day. The broad parterres, wider even than at Versailles, stretch away to the little river confined by rustic cascades, beyond which a broad upland rises, framed by a hemicycle of trees and decorated with an enormous gilded Farnese Hercules. The gardens are enriched with all the devices of Le Nôtre's art: fountains, great urns and vases, gilt statues, *rocailles*, and *treillages*. Some of the sunken gardens, notably that of the Bassin de la Couronne, still simulate the old *parterres de broderie*—designs carried out in clipped box-borders, whose compartments are filled with coloured stone and bits of glass. As a contrast

to these vast sunlit spaces, the whole garden is surrounded by a *tonnelle* of clipped hornbeam, whose dense shade entices one in from the summer's sun and leads to shady boscages, cool seats, and niches where ghostly statues gleam in the shadows.

To many critics, though these gardens were Le Nôtre's first important work, they remain his greatest achievement.

II

COURANCES

ON the route d'Arbonne the beeches were beginning to yellow; the cool depths of the forest near Franchard held a refreshing suggestion of chill—refreshing after the long summer warmth—and farther on, in the open spaces, the pines cast long bluish shadows over the drying heather that October morning. But the drive through the forest was none the less perfect, and our horses sniffed the brisk morning air with very evident pleasure.

And when we reached the confines of the woods, broad meadows lay before us and the air grew warmer. We passed a little village, then turned out into the fields until we came again to small patches of woodland grown with youngish trees. A faint crepitation in the woods to the left—a sound I knew very well—made Félix crack his whip and declare, "*On chasse chez Monsieur le Marquis aujourd'hui.*" Now and then a stray pheasant or a brace of partridges, escap-

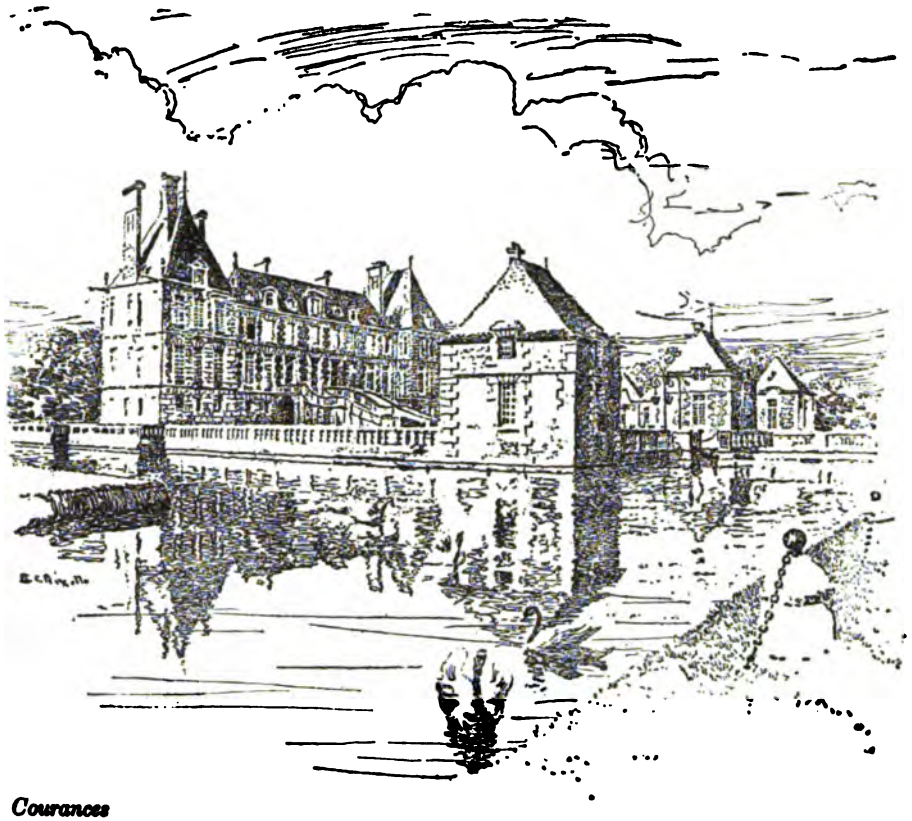
"Until we came again to small patches of woodland"

ing the beaters, would hum over our heads to the highlands on the right. But except for a white flag or two on the edge of the wood, we saw never a sign of the guns whose volleys we could still hear from time to time.

Not long after, a village came into sight, and we drew up in front of the single little inn of which the town of Courances boasts. We knew it of old, and after the usual words of greeting the proprietor and his buxom wife bestirred themselves to prepare something befitting our arrival. And it was good when served, as it always is in these primitive French inns.

Afterward we wandered down the road to where the château lies, in a hollow far from the "beaten track," unsought, unknown to the tourist, unchronicled by Baedeker. We had driven there frequently before, but no matter how often seen, one can never escape an *impression* at the first glimpse of the great avenue that acts as approach.

This royal *allée*—a hundred yards in width and thrice as long, bordered on each side by wide canals, behind which double curtains of sycamores, centuries old, whose branches, trimmed high, droop down, down into the very water itself—leads from the en-



Courances

trance gate to the square island where stands the château, whose peaked roofs and tall chimneys fittingly close the vista.

It is quite a walk up this avenue, and at its end you find yourself before the stone drawbridge. The château stands with its feet in the water, so to speak, mirroring itself in the silent waters of a broad moat to which groups of stately swans add life. The building, preceded by an immense stone forecourt, stands well back from the drawbridge and its four flanking pavilions. An exterior horse-shoe staircase, evidently inspired by, and at all events very reminiscent of, its neighbour at the Palace of Fontainebleau (in both cases a late excrescence and a disfigurement rather than an ornament), ascends to the main floor and entrance.

The château itself is a rarely perfect design of the time of Henry II, solid gray stone on its north or court side, brick and stone on its south or garden side, and the contrast between the sombre dignity of the one and the gay sunlit quality of the other is singularly effective.

Behind the château, the axis of the great avenue is again taken up by the central line of the beautiful

gardens embellished with statues, fountains, *corbeilles*, and cascades—all very formal in arrangement and quite in accord with the dignified old pile that they

Courances from the Gardens

frame. The gardens are surrounded on all sides by dense woods, damp, moss-grown, and ivy-clad.

The interior of the château has been somewhat modernised, but the main floor retains all its old characteristics: rooms in sequence occupying the

entire width without halls, their windows affording garden vistas to the south and views down the great *allée* to the north. They are furnished with taste and magnificence.

On the floor above, a corridor skirts the north side of the building, and opposite each of its windows a door opens into a bed-room, furnished in the classic French styles but with every modern comfort. Between these doors hang a series of rare Gobelin tapestries of exquisite workmanship, dating from the time of Louis XV, completely covering the wall spaces.

III

FLÈURY-EN-BIERE

WE picked up our carriage again in the town, and soon were off again across the Marquis's broad acres toward his other château, Fleury-en-Bière.

The landscape is beautifully undulating: hill slopes topped with woods and pastures adjoining fields of grain, and numerous clumps of coppice, ideal shelter for game with rich feeding-ground all about. The shooting that we had heard in the morning was again audible off to the right, and constantly grew nearer and nearer. Soon *rabatteurs* in white, carrying white flags, appeared coming toward us at a bend in the road, and presently a happy accident brought us into the very thick of the shoot.

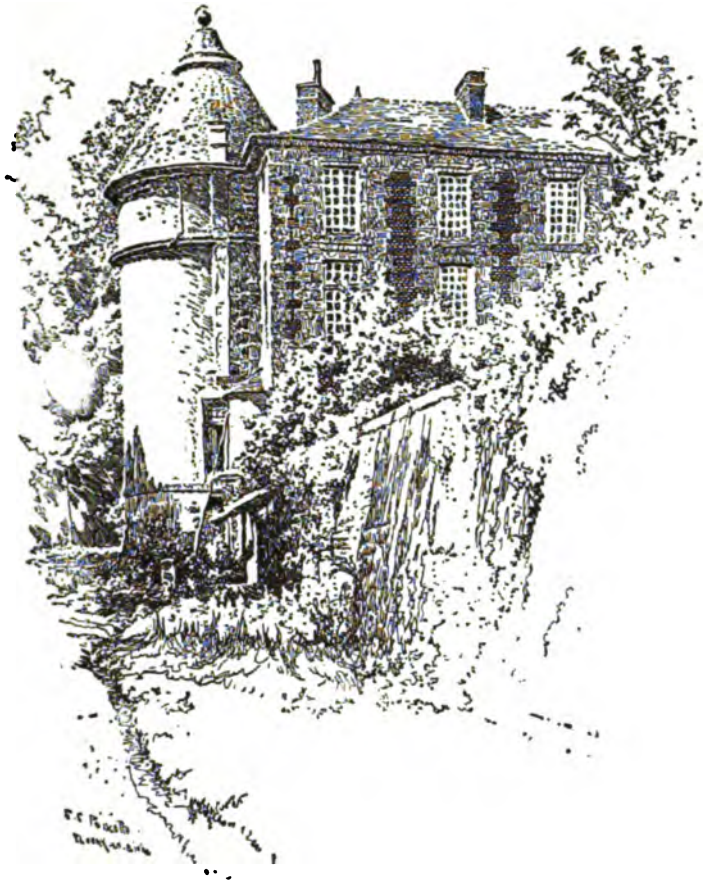
It made a brave show indeed, stretching across the fields a quarter-mile or so—seven "guns" only, spaced well apart, each followed by two men, one to reload and the other to pick up game, while on the flanks and behind, trudged quite a little army, nearly seventy

in all. Bringing up the rear was a commodious covered wagon, carrying extra guns and laden with game. As the long line approached each thicket where the birds had taken cover, the "beaters" advanced, and pheasants and partridges whirled out in clouds to be saluted with volleys from the rapid-fire guns.

We may all have our own ideas of how sportsmanlike a proceeding this is, and how much real pleasure is derived from the mere killing of quantities of game; but in the sunlight of this bright October afternoon it made a very pleasant picture and one to be remembered.

As I have said, Fleury was our objective point, and soon its long retaining-wall of gray stone with angle watch-towers came into sight.

The estate stands in open fields except for a tiny vassal town adjoining the château. This latter was built in the time of Francis I, and, in spite of its ruinous condition, remains an exceptionally fine type of the seigniorial residence of that period. A high stone wall beautifully panelled in brick, with a fine gatehouse in the middle, screens from the road a vast forecourt bordered on each side by servants' quarters and stables panelled to match the wall, and at the back by the big château.



Fleury, corner of the Moat

This is a simple stately building of gray stone with round corner-towers. At one end a wing projects, terminated by a very picturesque tower or group of towers, with high-pitched roofs, and the whole group of buildings is moated.

The château has not been occupied for years and the interior has fallen into woful disrepair, though the mantels and much of the old wood panelling still remain. Its present owner, the Marquis de G——, who lives at Courances, uses Fleury only as his farm. So one does not wonder to find the *basse cour* the real feature of the estate. It is a truly princely farm yard —the best that I remember to have seen, except, perhaps, the one belonging to the Chapter of Notre Dame, near Larchant. It adjoins the forecourt to the south and is surrounded on all sides by stone barns and wagon-houses, whose walls are also divided into the same brick panels that form so characteristic a feature of Fleury's architecture.

Great doors capable of swallowing entire hay-wains and topped with gables give access to the various granaries and hay-lofts. I can give no better idea of the size of this farm yard than by saying that I have actually seen half a regiment of artillery en-

Fleury and its Church

Fleury, the Forecourt

camped within its walls. Shepherds come back to it at evening from the moist fields below the château with their flocks of sheep; at milking time the cows wander in from rich pastures; turkeys strut in the sunshine and spread their tails; troops of fat geese and ducks hiss and cackle at the wayfarer; chickens pick in the manure piles, and sleek pigeons preen themselves on the gables.

It all takes one back to the days of childhood and the story of "Puss-in-Boots": "To whom do these broad acres belong?" "To the Marquis of Carabas." "To whom do these fat flocks belong?" "To the Marquis of Carabas."

. . . . . .

There are other châteaux in this same vicinity well worth a visit. Vaux-le-Pénil, on the banks of the Seine, is an imposing piece of eighteenth-century masonry; La Rochette, perched in the high woods across the river, dates from an earlier period; Fortoiseau is a happily preserved example of a summer home of the time of Louis XVI; Le Bréau is remarkable for its ample park, and the superb *boiseries* of its *salons*, where oval family portraits are framed in each of the upper panels.

MOTOR DRIVES

MOTOR DRIVES

I

TO PROVINS, SENS, AND NEMOURS

IT was a blustery June morning when we started from our home in Fontainebleau for this two days' jaunt. Big masses of billowy clouds flew ominously overhead only to give way to bright patches of sky and glistening sunlight, and after we had left the town and Valvins far behind, we enjoyed watching the great cloud shadows scurrying over the Bois de Valence, darkening the woods and racing along the roads as if to give chase to the motor car.

At the edge of the forest we turned off toward Montereau, which we soon discerned spreading its broad boulevards and embankments along the Seine and Yonne, which here come together. We stopped for a moment on the old stone bridge to evoke a picture of the assassination of Jean Sans Peur, Duke of Bur-

gundy, who was induced to come out alone upon it, to a parley on the broad *terre-plein* in the middle, there to be murdered by the Dauphin's hirelings. Over in the great church of Notre Dame close by you can see his sword hanging in the nave up over the high altar.

Off again over the broad plains, the motor devoured mile after mile of long white road flanked by files of slender poplars, trembling and fluttering and bending their tall heads under the breath of the brisk west wind. How we pitched down the grades, only to puff up the next hill and rush across the plains beyond! I remember but three towns on the way: Salins and its old fortress castle; Montigny-Lencoup, with a giant cedar on the hill and its picturesque church turning its high buttressed apse toward the cross-roads, and Donnemarie, with another fine church and ancient gate and a gallery around its deserted graveyard.

Otherwise only the broad white road with its attendant trees—the expansive plains, vast and well cultivated—and then you come to a hill.

From its summit you look down upon a smiling town, set partly upon a hill top and partly at the

junction of two valleys that surround this hill. This town, Provins, with its historic associations, its melancholy ruins, its bustling peasant life, the gaiety of

The broad white road and its attendant trees

its valley, its delicious cool ravines, choked with chestnut trees and terraced with hawthorn hedges and gardens, is to my mind one of the loveliest spots within easy access of Paris. Balzac (who knew his

provinces well), in relating his sad story of Pierrette, which he lays here in Provins, does not hesitate to call it a terrestrial paradise—one of the most charming towns in France. And he goes further and declares that the Provinois love their town so well that they never leave it for longer than is absolutely necessary, and that the proverb, "Mourir au gîte"—made for rabbits and faithful people—seems, above all others, to have been intended for them.

Provins lies just about twenty miles from civilisation; that is to say, only twenty miles away trainloads of tourists go constantly thundering by in the big expresses to Switzerland. But only local trains stop at Longueville, from which station a little branch road runs to Provins. It is just for this reason—this comparative inaccessibility—that the town has retained its charm and character.

We drew up at the Golden Ball Inn. It was a Saturday and a market day, and the lower town bustled with life. Here at the hotel, as it happened, the Cercle Agricole of the region was having its annual or semi-annual banquet, and the place hummed with the good-natured chatter of a crowd of well-to-do farmers, red-faced, fat, and happy after their

The Rue Couverte, Provins

Pantagruelian luncheon. We were shown into a private dining-room which gave directly on the interior yard of the inn, which, of course, like all the hostelries of this town, is a relic of the old stage-coach days, for Provins in its day was an important stop on the great post road to the east of France, constantly furrowed by diligences, calashes, and coaches. The court, upon this occasion, was completely choked with every conceivable sort of vehicle, from heavy farm wagons and one-horse chaises to smart tilburys and motor cars.

We had a very good luncheon and after it set out for a stroll over the worn cobble-stones.

In the lower town we found the Church of Sainte Croix, with its exquisite flamboyant portal; the clock-tower of Notre-Dame du Val, resembling the famous old gateway at Amboise; and Saint Ayoul, a squat old church whose picturesque excrescences almost hide its antiquity. And it is an ancient pile, for in the priory attached to it Abelard once taught. We found, too, any number of quaint old houses and mills along the Durtain and Voulzie, the two rivers that drain the valleys referred to above.

But it is in the upper town that the chief interest of Provins lies. Like the Upper City at Carcassonne, it

is quite deserted by modern life. But for that very reason, indeed, it has a melancholy charm that hushes the intruder, and one pokes silently and quite alone about its winding streets and along the old city walls with their ruined towers, their ivy-clad walls and moats choked with weeds and creepers.

The sensational monument is the donjon tower, La Tour de César, as it is called, a splendid specimen of feudal building. With its massive walls and high slate roofs, its cells and oubliettes, its huge reservoir to withstand a siege, it makes a stately relic indeed watching over its vassal town.

Saint Quiriace near by, though Provins's largest and most important church, possesses but few interesting details, for it has been sadly spoiled by restorations, and, worst of all, has been capped with an awful dome placed astride of the transept cross.

But we found compensation for its faults in the purity of style of the cross and well in the Place du Châtel; in the twelfth century Grange-aux-Dîmes (or granary for tithes), with its beautiful vaulted chambers; and in a rarely early and perfect house of the Romanesque period in the Rue du Palais.

Sens on a Fête Day

We did not get away from Provins till five o'clock. Once out of the town, we sped down the lovely valley of the Voulzie to its confluence with the Seine, crossing the latter river at Bray-sur-Seine, then climbing the hills beyond. An hour's drive over the uplands brought us to the brink of the valley of the Yonne, which river we struck at Pont-sur-Yonne, an ancient residence of the dukes of Nemours. Here a superb road leads along the river bank all the way to Sens, where we arrived by seven o'clock, just in time for dinner.

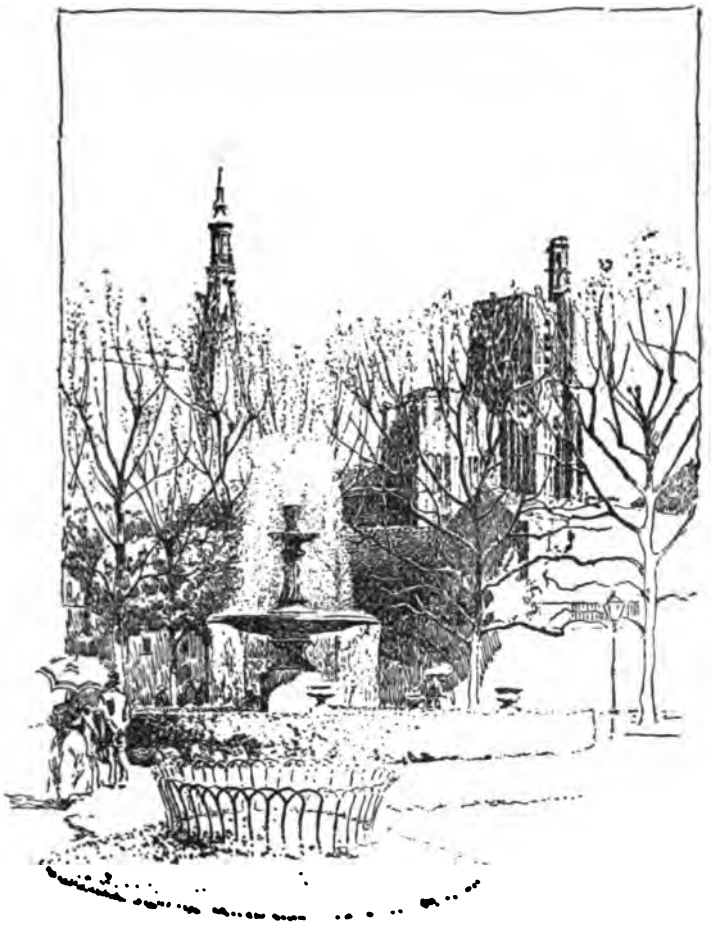
We found this town *en fête*, and spent the evening very pleasantly in wandering among the booths, in watching the crowds, and especially in assisting at a performance by strolling players at a portable theatre on the esplanade. What melodrama, what ranting, and what gesture—all of which the big, simple audience swallowed with bated breath!

The cathedral of Sens is, perhaps, notable for size rather than beauty, as we found on visiting it the next morning, but the interior is lofty, pure, and impressive, and the south portal or Portail d' Abraham, with its superb rose-window and rich traceries, especially called forth our enthusiasm. Adjoining the mother

church is the Palais Synodal, a very pure piece of early Gothic deemed worthy of restoration by Viollet-le-Duc. We also found vestiges of an amphitheatre and temples in the very centre of the town, Sens having been a Gallic city of real importance even in Roman days. There is, too, a lofty fragment of the third century walls, pierced by a highly picturesque postern gate of a much later period out on one of the exterior boulevards, and scattered through the town one may discover many a half-timbered house ornamented with quaint wooden sculptures.

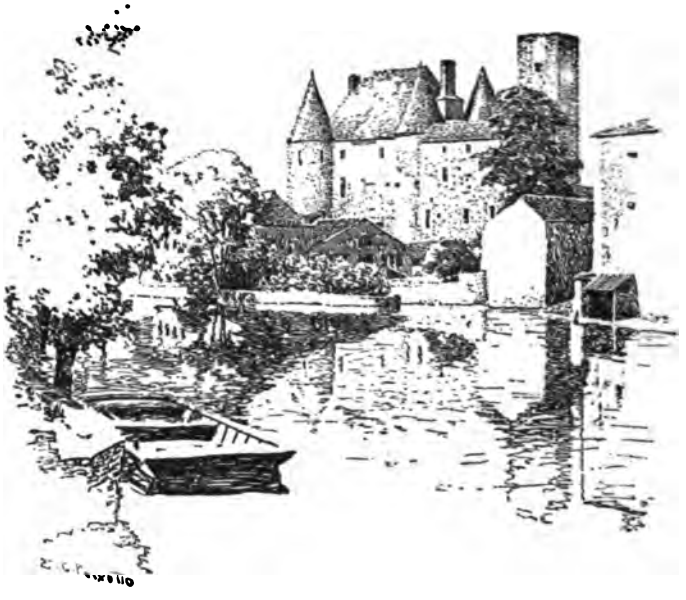
Our chauffeur met us in front of the cathedral, and by eleven o'clock whisked us across the Yonne, then up the high chalk cliffs that skirt its left bank. It was a very stiff climb indeed, even on the third speed, up a winding road, affording many fine views out over the valley and down upon the city, whose cathedral towers and Hôtel de Ville spire mounted high above its sea of blue-slate roofs. On attaining the summit, a broad upland plateau spread out before us, and we ate up the miles at a great rate.

A few people like ourselves enjoying the fine Sunday morning in motor cars, were about the only human beings we encountered.



Sens Cathedral from the Tapis Vert

Via Cheroy and Lorrèze, we attained Nemours in less than half an hour. We alighted for lunch at the Ecu-de-France, which Victor Hugo, an ardent ad-



The Château of Nemours

mirer of Nemours, cites in his "France et Belgique" as a typical *auberge* of rural France. And a rarely characteristic inn it is, preserving every feature of its olden days: its great kitchen, with its brave array of

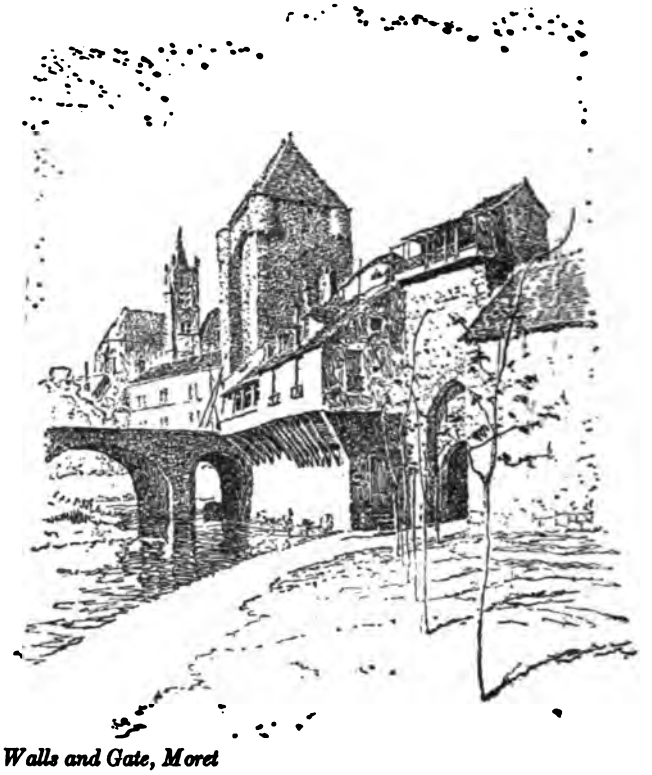
coppers and brasses; its court-yard, stable-yard, and well; its vast *salle* and small, quaintly furnished dining-rooms, and its big-hearted proprietor and chef, whose wife will always make you comfortable.

Standing before it and looking down at the church below, who can repress a thought of little Ursule Mirouet and her scheming relatives gathered round its portal, as Balzac depicts them in his story so replete with descriptions of the pretty town and of the country round about it?

We were joined here by my old friend M——, a well-known landscape painter and a native of Nemours, and with him visited the château, once the residence of the proud Guises, dukes of Nemours, and inspected in detail its halls and tower-rooms and its interesting little collections, winding up on the top of its great donjon tower which overlooks the pastoral valley of the Loing, so beloved by the artist craft.

We were now nearing home again. An hour's ride from Nemours brought us to Grezsur-Loing, where we stopped for tea and refreshments and to say good-day to Madame Chevillon, whom we found, as usual, in her kitchen preparing chickens for dinner.

Hers is a little hostelry that some years ago was a favourite resort of a rare group of men of whom



The Walls and Gate, Moret

Robert Louis Stevenson was the moving spirit. Its dining-room is still panelled in wood, each panel painted by an artist, many of them American and

most of them since become famous. We took tea in the garden down by the glittering river beside the long stone bridge, painted times without number, that leads across to marshy lowlands, adorned with superb bouquets of cottonwood trees.

In the motor again we drove on to Marlotte, known to the world through Murger's "Vie de Bohême," and Montigny, both of these old haunts of ours, and then on to Moret, where we planned to dine at a little pleasure resort kept by Madame Chevillon's son. From its garden by the river we enjoyed the sunset: the reedy stream in the foreground, the fine stone bridge so often seen in Sisley's paintings, the city gates and walls, with the fretwork of the church, and the donjon towering against the evening sky. We thought of our friends over there in the town, taking their coffee in their quiet gardens by the river or close under the city wall, and the temptation was strong to pull the latch-strings that were always down. But we resisted, returning instead to Fontainebleau late in the evening through the depths of the forest.

II

TO ETAMPES, MAINTENON, AND CHARTRES

TWO days later we started for a second trip, this time turning our faces westward by the same Route d'Arbonne that we had taken in going to Courances. After four miles or so of forest land, we sped out onto the plain. And such a lovely picture it made that bright June morning, with its patches of wheat and barley alive with corn-flowers and poppies—field upon field of flaming combinations of yellow, red, and blue! The first large town on the road is Milly, where we stopped to have a look at its battlemented old castle near the inn where Henry IV once slept, and at the curious old open timber market-houses dating from the fifteenth century.

Bits of forest land, a village now and then, hills, quarries, and a river or two to cross, and we found ourselves coasting down into a broad valley with a long, white smiling town lying among groves of cotton-

wood trees and poplars planted with mathematical precision, like soldiers on parade in files and solid squares and phalanxes. This was Etampes. We

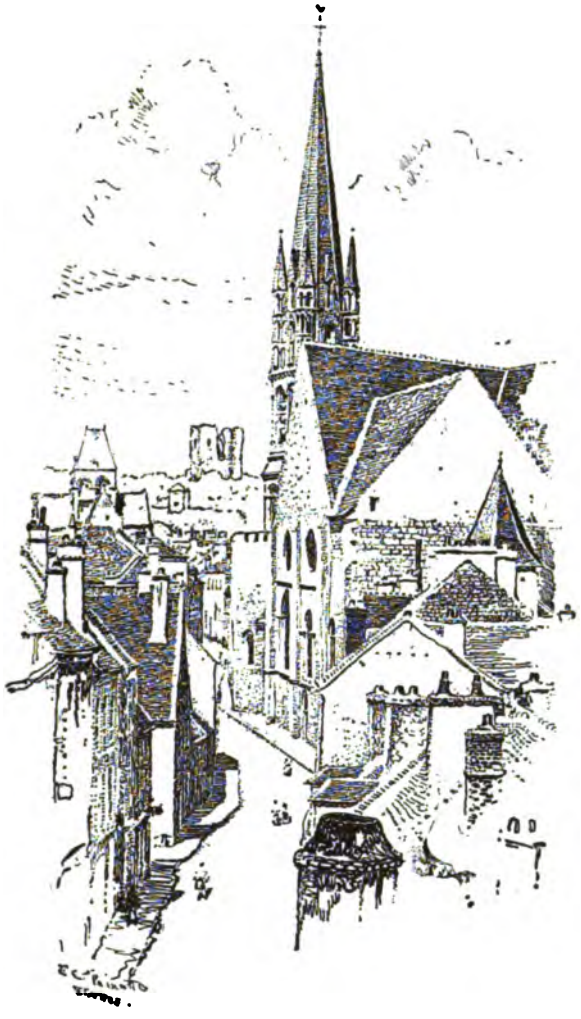
Old Mill near Etampes

arrived just in time to welcome a wedding procession to the embattled portal of the Church of Notre Dame. Its beautiful belfry is directly over the main door, and as we approached an old woman was ringing for the marriage service. She would pull down the bell with

all her strength, and as it swung over it would hoist her off the ground and at least two or three feet into the air, when she would come down again with another great pull.

An imposing beadle warned us back as the country wedding party, awkward and red-faced in their unaccustomed finery, now alighted and filed into the church. We followed them in and watched the ceremony with interest, our amused curiosity centring upon the groom and his hunt for the ring in every one of his many pockets. He finally found it in his coat-tail in a box which he carefully opened. From this box he extracted the ring, closely wrapped in paper; then he unfolded the paper, placed the ring upon the bride's finger, refolded the paper, replaced it in the box and the box in his coat-tail pocket, and then, and not till then, did we breathe a sigh of relief.

Etampes has an old Hôtel de Ville, a dwelling of Louis XI's epoch, and two other remarkable houses —that of Diane de Poitiers, with a beautiful façade toward the court, and that of Anne de Pisseleu, Duchesse d'Etampes, both of the very best period of the early Renaissance, as, indeed, they should be, as the homes of two favourites of the lordly Francis, whose



Etampes, the Church

likeness we discovered cut in a medallion over one of Diana's doors.

We crossed the Juine, the little river that waters this fertile valley, and here had some difficulty in finding our road. The peasants wanted to send us to Rambouillet via Ablis, and we wished to go by way of Dourdan, to see its old castle built by Philip Augustus.

It is only about ten miles away, and when we once found the road it took us but little time to reach it. We felt well repaid for the trouble when we had viewed the vine-clad walls, the donjon, and nine lesser towers of this fortress, built by the very Philip who led the crusades with Cœur de Lion and was afterward victor at Bouvines.

After lunch we took the Route de Saint Arnoult, and, passing that town, entered the forest of Rambouillet, where the wire fences of game preserves appear on every hand. This forest is the special hunting ground of the President of France, and its *tirées* are stocked with quantities of pheasants, partridges, and hares, to be shot in veritable hecatombs by royal visitors and people of great distinction, guests of the Republic. Its northern confines

touch again the Chevreuse district, and we found ourselves almost back again at Cernay. How particularly rich in monument and souvenir this Ile de

The Castle of Philip Augustus, Dourdan

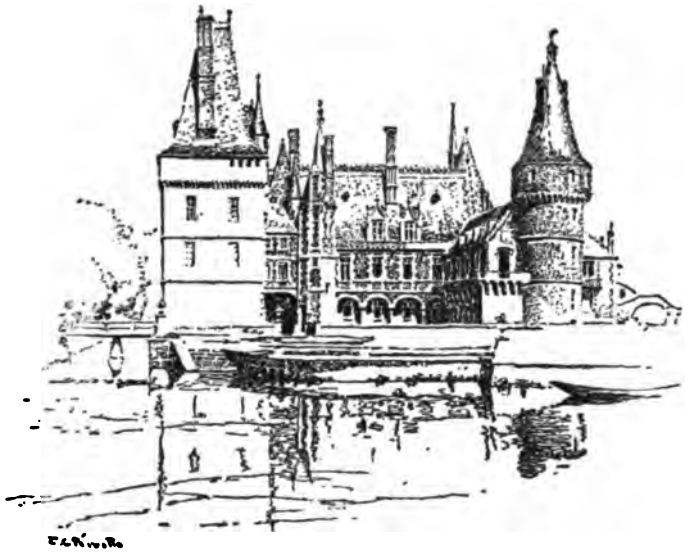
France country is; yet how seldom is it properly explored by tourists!

The Château of Rambouillet, though an extensive pile, is of mediocre interest. To be sure, Francis I

died in the great round tower and Charles X signed his abdication here. But the palace has been modernised in sad official taste and has lost its character. Artistically, its only claim to distinction rests on a suite of rooms beautifully panelled in oak in the exquisite though florid style of Louis XV. A little room with rounded corners, called the boudoir of Marie Antoinette, is of special beauty. There are other souvenirs of this unfortunate queen in the beautiful gardens: a hermitage and *laiterie* built for her by her husband to recall her beloved Trianon, and a curious little bath-room, also bearing her name, entirely walled with Delft tiles.

The big main road from Paris to Chartres now took us on to Maintenon, which gave her title to Louis XIV's favourite, later his wife. The château here, now belonging to the Duc de Noailles, possesses many of the features of the better-known châteaux of Touraine and is a worthy rival to them. In style it is Louis XII and its high-pitched roofs and chimneys, its rich dormer-windows, its tourelles and finials, form a rarely picturesque sky line. Its north front of cold gray stone facing the entrance court is dignified and formal, but the south facade

is a perfect riot of arcades, galleries, and balconies surmounted by towers, round, square, and octagonal. It faces upon a broad parterre whose parapets are decorated with pots of flowers, and the whole



Château of Maintenon

château stands encircled by wide canals fed by water from the Eure. Louis XIV evolved a scheme which was never completed, to bring this water to his gardens at Versailles, and the gigantic aqueduct that he began and on which he employed thirty thousand

men for four years, its arches rivalling in size the aqueducts of the Campagna, still remains at the lower end of the Château Park to attest his extravagance.

The interior of the château can sometimes be visited. Madame de Maintenon's room preserves much

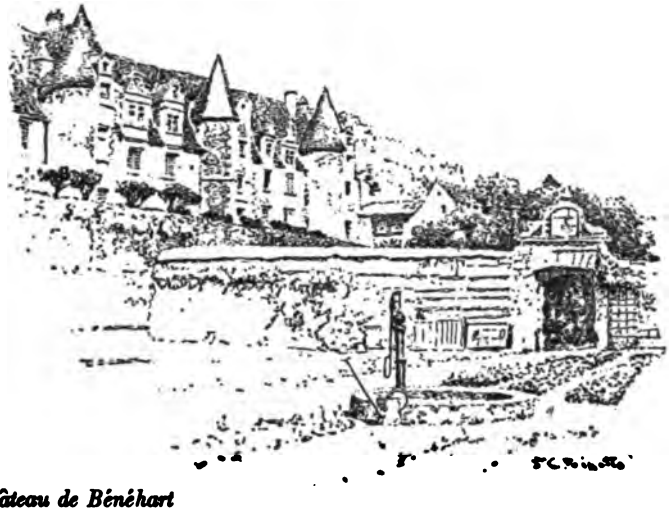
The great plains of the Beauce

of its old-time character, and Rigaud's portrait of her still hangs in the long gallery among portraits of the long line of ancestors of the Noailles family.

The road from Maintenon to Chartres traverses the great plains of the Beauce, one of the richest agricultural districts of central France, a region whose fields are extensive enough to encourage the use of the most improved farming machinery. In huge

Chartres Cathedral

courts, teeming with prosperity, you catch glimpses as you pass of big white oxen yoked in pairs by iron chains; of long-eared pink hogs rooting by ponds alive with ducks; of hens leading their chicks



Château de Bénéhart

to scratch in vast manure piles and of herds of sheep under the watchful care of collie and shepherd.

Soon to the left two points appear upon the horizon and become brighter and brighter, loftier and loftier; then the body of a church looms up like the hull after the masts of a ship at sea and you realise that you are approaching Chartres.

We drew up at the Grand Monarque and spent the evening wandering about a fête in progress—a jolly big blaze of light, blatant with Barbary organs, merry-go-rounds, and booths filled with astounding wares.

Next morning, it being Sunday, we attended mass at the cathedral. Never had its stained glass appeared more rich and glorious in colour nor its soaring arches more perfectly harmonious.

Despite its being an old story to all of us, it threatened to hold us all day long.

III

TO THE VALLEY OF THE LOIRE

BEFORE noon, however, we were speeding along again over the broad fields of the Beauce, quiet, extensive, almost level, with scarcely a sign of life this quiet Sunday morning. We lunched by the roadside under a clump of apple trees on delicious game patties (a specialty of Chartres) stored away before our departure, and some excellent Chablis perfectly iced in Thermos bottles.

Another twenty miles and we gained Châteaudun, where we tarried long enough to see its grand old castle perched on an abutting crag overhanging the valley of the Loire. It is a ruinous old pile much like Langeais must have been, I fancy, half a century ago, and one wanders quite at will up its spiral staircases and into its vast bare halls with stone stags couchant on the mantel-shelves, and out onto its terraces giddily overhanging the deep rift of the valley.

A well-kept cross-country road sped us on to Blois, whose towers soon peeped above the upland plain.

Depositing our luggage as we passed, we spent the sunset hours in a ride and visit to Chambord, returning to dine on the hotel's terrace overlooking the placid Loire.

Next morning, off again, we sped down the river, finally crossing it on the suspension bridge at Chaumont—a long, creaky structure that groaned and quivered under the car and made the ladies heave a sigh of relief when we reached the farther shore.

Here at Chaumont we stopped for lunch at the little Hôtel du Château, almost opposite the great gates of the park. It is a typical French *auberge*, with a not too prepossessing exterior, but with an old-fashioned air of good cheer and comfort. We entered its large café, or billiard-room, and found the walls frescoed with the quaintest old pictures, rudely painted back in the forties by some seafaring man. Their stormy, wind-blown skies and rolling billows look strangely out of place in this peaceful inland inn.

We ordered luncheon and sat down to wait at one of the little tables, warm and thirsty, so Madame recommended a little sparkling *vin de Chaumont*.

Delicious it was, too, coolly sizzling in its tall glasses! As we slowly enjoyed it, we could peep through the

The Court, Château de Chaumont

kitchen door and see our hostess return from her garden with bunches of radishes and salad—fresh-picked—and soon we were bidden into a little room, darkened to exclude the noonday heat. Here a table with

immaculate linen and green potted plants in the centre, stood enticingly ready. Mademoiselle now made her appearance with sardines, and the radishes above mentioned, and the sweetest of sweet butter. Followed an omelette, light and fluffy and properly browned; then chops and potatoes, then salad, and lastly our cheese and coffee—the traditional good French luncheon.

Then we visited the château, perched high on its bluff. We wandered through rooms where Catherine de Médicis had lived, adjoining those of her astrologer, Ruggieri, whose cabalistic signs are graven on the mantel-shelf. We lingered long under the stately elms in the garden and walked on the broad terraces overlooking the river, the hillsides and valley, woodlands and fields, with little white villages nestling among the trees.

In the cool of the afternoon we were off again—this time skirting the left bank of the shimmering river, passing peasants home-returning with their heavy loads. It is but a short run to Amboise, whose beautiful château is one of the glories of Touraine. We thought that the finest view of it was obtained as we left the town to ascend the hill to the south.

Fields of vegetables and waving grain, multicoloured, stretched in an amphitheatre about us. Below, nestled in the valley, lay the village, its blue-slate roofs, half hidden in the tree tops, hugging close to the winding Loire. The château, massive as a cliff, rose abruptly above it, its sky line exquisitely relieved by the delicate tracery of its dormer-windows and the perforated spire of its chapel.

The road to Chenonceaux now led us through the forest—one of those dainty forests of small trees interspersed with many white birches. Little by-paths beckoned an irresistible invitation to wander down to the peep of blue sky in the distance; the woodman's axe resounded in the silence; a teamster's "he" or "ho" came wafted from afar. How cool the shade! how delicious the odour of the ferns and rich, warm earth! We glided up and down a succession of gently rolling slopes, till suddenly the valley of the Cher burst upon us, stretching its richly cultivated fields to the far horizon. A long coast, then a turn to the left, and we soon reached Chenonceaux and its beautiful château standing in the Cher. Another eighteen miles or so and we were in Tours, the heart of the château district.

IN TOURAINE

IN TOURAINE

I

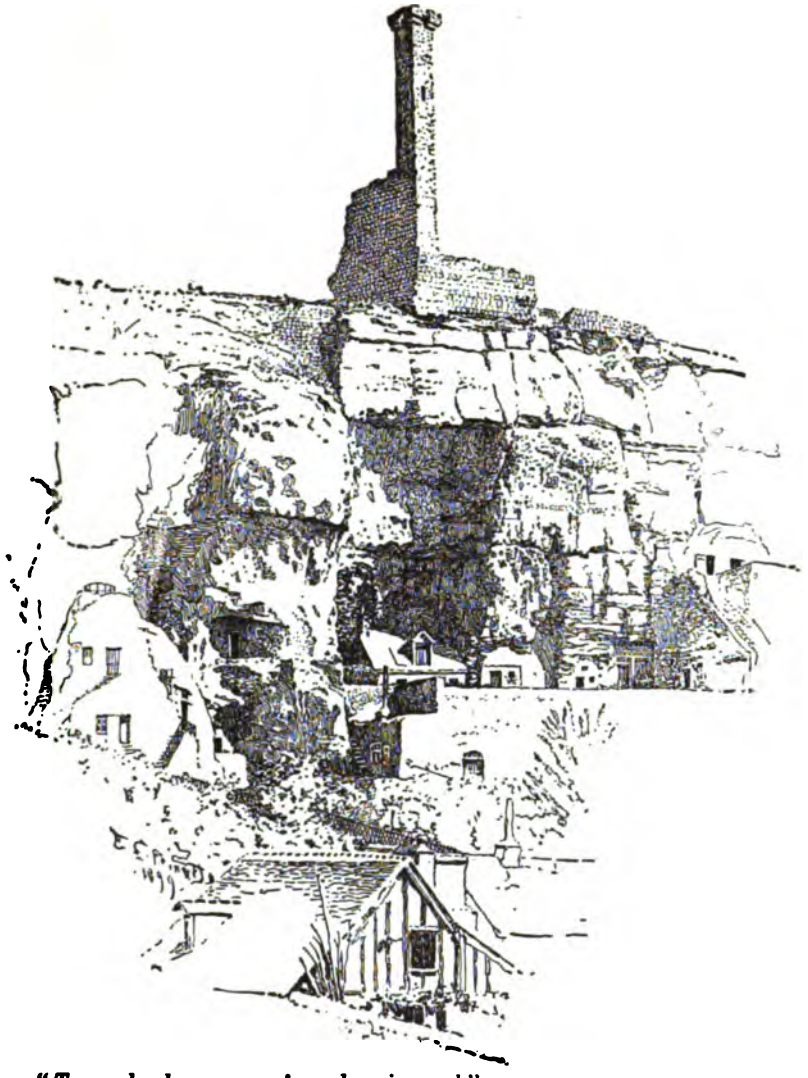
CLIFF-DWELLERS

WE are accustomed to think of cliff-dwellers as a prehistoric race, the remains of whose few scattered dwellings are a matter of curiosity to tourists and a prize to antiquarians.

We had seen in Normandy isolated instances of people living in habitations half house and half cave, but they were of the very poorest class. So our first real cave-city came as a surprise, suddenly, at Rochecorbon, only a few miles from Tours.

High above us towered a huge mass of overhanging rock, strata upon strata, bearing upon its summit a most peculiar tower, supposedly a watch-tower in ages gone by. Its foundations hung over the rock upon which they were built, and it seemed as though the whole mass might crash down at any moment upon the village beneath.

Habitation upon habitation could be seen scattered over the face of this cliff, doors and windows, narrow stairways and little belvederes, huddled in most picturesque disorder. Walls along the high-road hid the immediate foreground, and we looked in vain for an opening through which to have a nearer view of this strange community. At last we found a gate, and, peeping through, were greeted by a little old woman whose wrinkled, smiling face was surmounted by a snowy cap. Her doorway was a bower of flowers: hollyhocks, asters, nasturtiums, and deep June roses. By its side was an old well and a little out-house for her wood and gardening tools. Her cheery "*Bon jour*" was an invitation to enter, which we gladly accepted. We followed her across the little yard and were soon seated in her one and only room. This room was cosiness itself; a large canopied bed occupied the far corner; a great open fireplace filled one side, and around and on it were grouped all her lares and penates: her wedding-wreath—ah, so old!—her little crucifix, and china jars to hold her flowers. Photographs and tin-types of all her family and of her son in his soldier's uniform, a few cane chairs, a huge *armoire*, and a long, low chest completed the



"Towered a huge mass of overhanging rock"

furnishing of this little home. Spotless muslin curtains hung in the tiny windows and tempered the glaring red of the geraniums placed on the sill outside. Our hostess was only too glad to tell of her life and her home. Our first thought was that these caves must be damp and unsanitary. She told us, however, and we afterward found that her opinion was shared by all cave-dwellers, that these houses are, on the contrary, very dry and healthful. Certainly, if we may judge by the number of old people whom we saw living in them, they do not shorten the lives of their occupants. The peasants say, too, that they are cool in summer, and in the winter moderate the cold so that a fire is scarcely necessary.

Houses built at the foot of the hills are inclined to be damp, but those cut high up on the hillside are extremely dry and mould is never known in them. These upper caves are reached by special staircases cut in the face of the cliffs, and if the houses have more than one story, the stairs still continue to ascend its facade to reach the upper floor!

Sometimes these queer homes are superposed one upon the other, each approached at a different angle by its individual stairway. Often the only light is

A Cliff-dwelling

through the door, though there is usually a small square window, and frequently, when the house is built in an abrupt angle of the cliff, it has as many as four and five windows.

The long chest of which I have spoken is found in every dwelling, and is used for provisions. In it are kept the great loaves of bread which feed the little ones, the butter, cheese, and *confitures*, if the family is well-to-do. The vegetables are brought from the little garden, for each house possesses one; and if it be cherry season or grape time the good peasants will proudly offer you their prized fruits. But the comfort of the home is the open fireplace, wherein always hangs the great iron pot, blackened with the smoke of years. The peasants rarely have a match; if the fire be dead they go with a shovel to their neighbour and return with embers, as in the days of yore. There is always a well not far off, whose opening is closed with a little locked door, so that no one can use the water save those entitled to do so.

The rents paid for these little homesteads are really amusing; five dollars a year and you have a snug little place with a garden in front, and a view—oh, such as Monsieur le Comte in his château below

cannot boast of. Eight dollars a year and you have a house of three or four rooms, with a stable and a store-house in a great cave not far off.

A place that had great charm for us was bought outright for twenty dollars! To think of providing a shelter for a lifetime at such a price! The owner, fancying to enlarge her domain, purchased an adjoining garden for twelve dollars. In it she raises green peas, cauliflower, lettuce, beets, and carrots, and a number of cherry and apple trees give her their fruit. With the pears she makes a drink of which the peasants are very fond.

The animals are kept in stables, also cut in the rock, the mangers and water-troughs being hollowed out of the solid stone. In these dark interiors glimpses are caught of cows sleepily chewing their cud; of horses eating their evening meal; of donkeys, who loudly bray their welcome as the door is opened. The peasants tell us that in such stables the animals never suffer from heat or cold, as Mother Earth tempers the extremes of the outer world with her own genial warmth.

So are the caves near the surface, utilised, but another world exists in the great labyrinths, ancient

quarries, which tunnel the hillsides to their very centres. Here strange trades are carried on, and here the wines, for which this country is famous, ripen and become mellow in their cool cellars. The high caves were used as ateliers for the drying of hemp and the making of linen, and many of the great rafters on which the hemp was hung still remain. Often these quarries are forty feet high at the opening and lead into an interior chamber nearly one hundred feet square, with rough columns left to support the great weight overhead. Sometimes a house is built within this darksome chamber, vine-clad and moss-grown, and to such a home many a peasant bride has been taken to spend her honeymoon.

The strangest of these underground worlds which I visited was one devoted to the raising of mushrooms. Its limits seemed unbounded, as indeed they were, for it pierced the hillsides in every direction. We entered through an opening under an orchard of cherry trees. About ten feet inside the entrance was a well, and near it a lantern, which my kind guide lighted. We had proceeded but a few steps when suddenly the air became very close and warm and a dense white mist shut us in. I found this was heat

and steam rising from huge piles of manure, stacked in an adjoining passage. When brought from the cavalry barracks near by, it is here "worked" by the

A Cliff-dweller's Home

admixture of water until it attains the required consistency. We soon passed this steam and heat and entered caves where the air was dry and cool.

Here manure is laid out in rounded hummocks along the walls, and in the wider passages, in lines

down the centre as well. Sometimes there are as many as five of these rows. The mushroom seed is then placed in these manure piles, and the date of the "planting" is written on the wall above the section. The mounds are then covered with a fine powder obtained by sifting the tailings from the quarried limestone, just as coal dust is separated from coal. The mushroom is now planted and the hummock is left undisturbed for three months, more or less, when the first growth begins to appear. The mushrooms continue to sprout during three months, but then engender a certain poisonous gas which kills their own seed. The whole planting must then be removed and the place thoroughly cleaned.

During "harvest time" a crop is gathered every twenty-four hours. Three men with their great baskets, make the rounds of this underground farm every morning, and every day in the year can count on an immense crop which they ship to the large cities near by, and even miles away. The discoloured and inferior mushrooms are sent to the canneries, and for his best growth the producer receives only twenty cents a pound!

There is occasionally great danger connected with these mysterious dark worlds. I saw the awful result of one cave-in when gigantic masses of stone had crushed all beneath them—house, stables, and inmates. The clear light of heaven shone down through the great gaping hole, and tons of débris lay where they had fallen, completely blocking the cave entrance. The peasants point it out with a shudder.

II

CHINON AND LOCHES

WE climbed the steep stairs to the château of Chinon on a bright sunny morning, mounting between walls of almost Oriental brilliance with only a peep of the deep blue sky above our heads. As we looked up, two peasant women in white caps nodded a greeting from the parapet above and we had a suspicion of red chimney-pots high above them.

A broad walk, shaded by trees, led us past the remains of the oldest part of the castle, and soon we had crossed the moat and entered the gate. Crumbling ruins and massive towers with grass-grown battlements surrounded us on every side. The extent of this grim old fortress-castle is tremendous, but decay has set its finger on the place and all that remains are caved-in passages, fragments of fireplaces, and tottering window-frames.

Chinon from the Market-place

Memories of Jeanne d'Arc cling about the place, for here she came to wake the idle king from his life of ease, and, after weeks of prayer, from here she set forth to lead the French army to victory. Despite time's devastation, the tower wherein she lived while

The Castle, Chinon

at Chinon is still to be seen, and a large fragment of the room in which her first interview with the king took place.

But the great attraction of the giant walls is a walk along the parapet and a glance at the glorious panorama which lies at one's feet. The peaceful valley of the Vienne stretches as far as the eye can see. The distant hills are spotted with villages and châteaux;

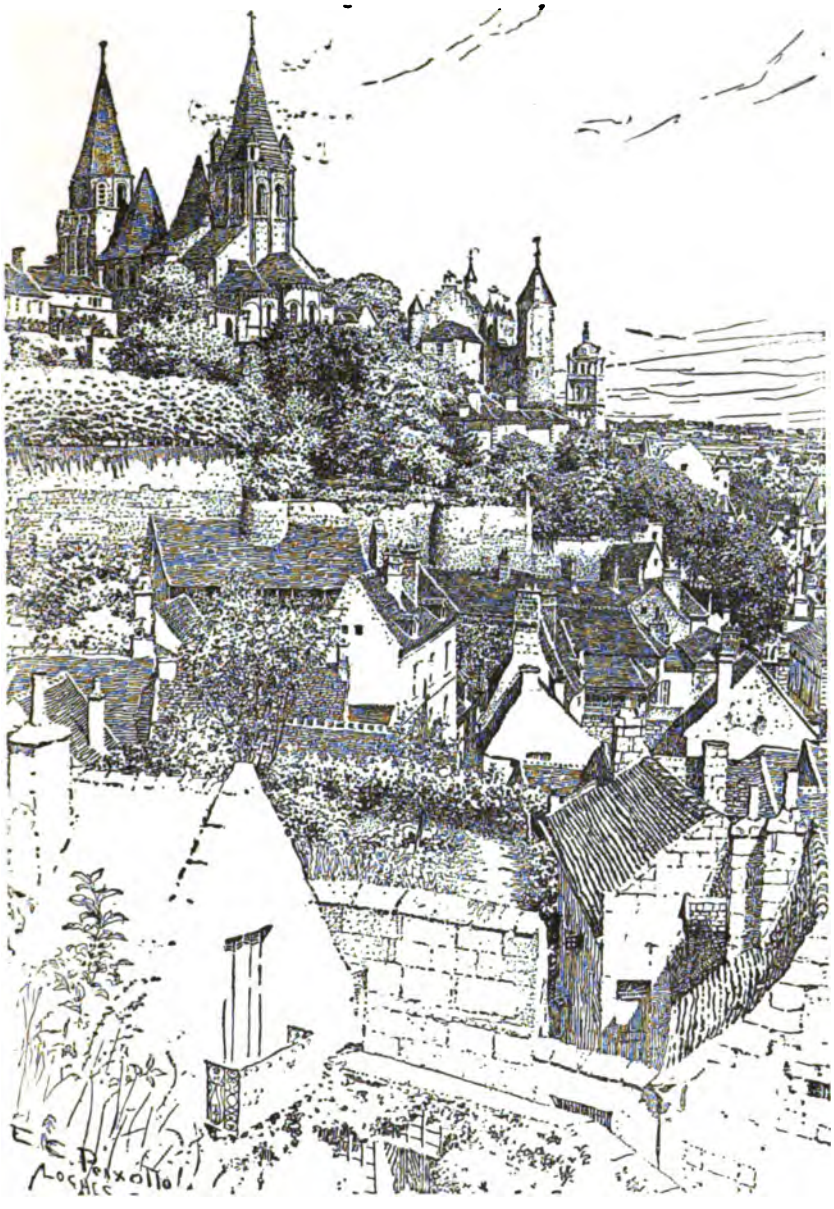
the well-tilled fields, with their ripening crops, stretch from the banks of the river which winds like a broad silver band from horizon to horizon, spanned just beneath by a great stone bridge.

At our feet, so close that we can look down the chimney-pots, nestles the old Gothic city. Its four churches raise their backs above the neighbouring houses, but all else is a compact mass of blue slate roofs, high pitched, with dormer-windows and innumerable chimney-pots. Little pointed tourelles cling to the corners and far below we catch a hint of stone-paved streets. These few zigzag streets wind along the river more or less parallel to its course, affording at every turn new glimpses of fascinating gables, Gothic windows with their crumbling tracery, and houses whose huge timbers have withstood the wear of centuries, but whose paneless windows are now but the resting-place of countless spiders. Few, however, of these houses have been abandoned, and in nearly all of them the windows are adorned with rows of potted geraniums, brilliantly lighting up the cold gray stone.

Women in white caps lead little donkey-carts through these quaint old lanes or peddle fruits and

An Old Street, Chinon

vegetables in baskets of queer design, gossiping with their customers on the way and vending news as well as their wares. Thursday is market-day, and the town wakes to a state of unwonted activity. From the early morning hours, peasants begin to arrive at the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, and there set up their booths and awnings. Soon huge pyramids of artichokes arise, and stands of potted plants; fruits, cheap calicoes, shoes, hardware, ribbons, and laces and all conceivable kinds of fancy articles are arranged in enticing array. By eleven o'clock the babel of tongues becomes alarming! Women in strange coifs, men in blue blouses and *casquettes*, haggle and quarrel over their purchases. Two shepherds with pipes add a most unearthly screeching, and are rewarded with numerous sous. One hardware dealer, who attracts attention to his wares by blowing a bugle, is outdone by a rival who has a drum with a patent crank attachment to keep it beating all the time. In the afternoon the old women meet at the goose market and around the venders of butter and eggs. Then is the time to see the wonderful collection of coifs. Each of the surrounding villages has its own particular headdress. Many are made of the finest lace and some are



Loches

of great size. One of the most elaborate has been given up because recent generations have gradually lost the art of laundering it, and now only a few women will take the trouble to wear it.

Toward five o'clock the crowd begins to diminish. By dark the streets become deserted; an occasional lantern projecting from a house-corner sheds its dim light. Alleys lead to unknown mysteries of darkness. Voices issue from the dwellings, and the sweet scent of honeysuckle is borne over the high street walls. Occasional glimpses are caught of dimly lighted interiors, where old women sit knitting or eating their meagre *pot-au-feu*, or of a family gathered round the evening meal in such a light as Gerard Douw so loved to paint. By ten o'clock the old town slumbers, and as we go to rest the only sound that greets our ears is the splash of the fountain in the square below our window.

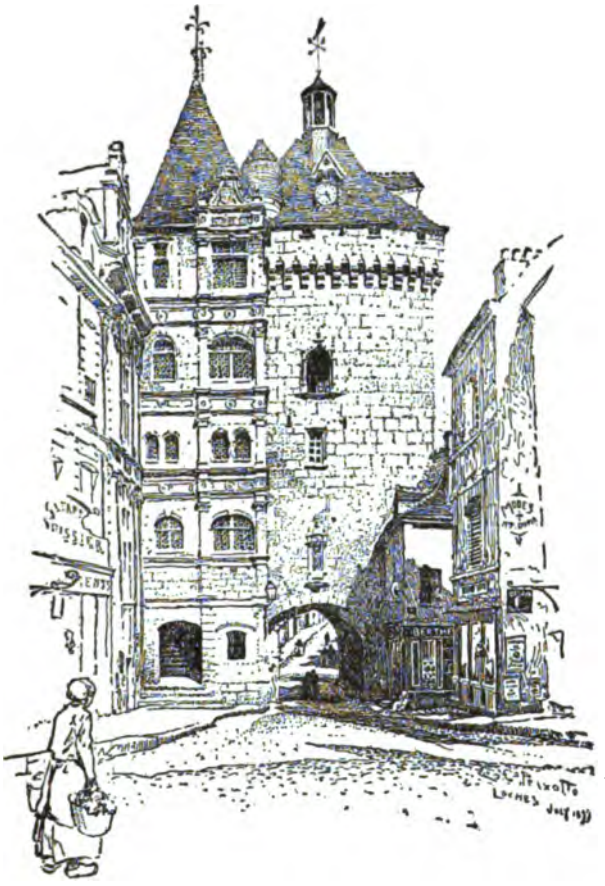
DISTINCTLY sombre memories hang over the old town of Loches. Though situated in a wide and fertile valley, watered by the sparkling waters of the Indre, it rises like a gaunt fortress on the crest of its hill, the roof-tops piling up to its broad crown of walls, hold-

ing, within their strong embrace, the lofty towers of its château, its abbey church, and the tremendous stone mass of its donjon, about whose walls great flocks of crows continually soar, filling the air with their strident cries. This grim fortress-prison hid the crimes of Louis XI, and here were kept all personal

"Rises like a fortress"

enemies of the crown accused of that broad crime of "treason." What tales its echoing walls could tell! What memories cling about its black cells and oublièttes! Here, for nine years, Ludovico Sforza was confined in a cell whose walls are covered with rude frescoes which his hand traced—crude likenesses of himself with casque on head, and a small sun-dial, by whose aid he could count the waning hours of the

lonely days as the single ray of sunlight filtered through his solitary window. Below his cell is another bearing marks still more touching. In it were confined three bishops accused of treason to the state. On the wall, opposite the slit of a window which gave them their only light, they cut a rough crucifix in the stone. On one side of it, a small recess was made for their Bible, and on the other a hollow, in which the holy water was kept. At this primitive altar they celebrated their mass during two years. They climbed, by means of several dents in the stone, to the window-slit to see the one atom of green hill-top which was their only glimpse of dear mother earth. Adjoining is a still darker chamber without a ray of light (hollowed in the solid rock of the hillside), which, with its dreadful oubliette in the corner, is a fearful reminder of the "Pit and the Pendulum." It takes but little imagination to picture the life in this awful prison, with Cardinal de la Balue swinging in his iron cage, and the Duc d'Alençon with a great chain riveted round his neck, dragging himself before his guards. And, strange fate, the torture-chamber, whose rack is still in place, is now filled with cots, a resting-place for homeless tramps.



The Porte Picoys and Hôtel de Ville, Loches

This donjon, with its surrounding towers and fortifications, occupies one end of the walled space which constituted the upper city, to which access was only gained by means of a massive battlemented gateway with drawbridge and moat. The other end of the upper city was occupied by the royal château, a picturesque pile of buildings with numerous *pignons* and *turrets*.

Agnes Sorel, "*La Dame de Beauté*," and Charles VII lived and loved here, and she was buried in the abbey church. In the château we see her tombstone surmounted by a recumbent figure with angels watching over her head and with her little feet resting in the fleece of two young lambs. Hers seems the only sweet and peaceful figure in these grim surroundings, though Nature wears a smiling face as one views her from the broad parterres where Agnes must have walked with her royal lover.

Between the château and the donjon rises the distinctive feature of Loches, the abbey church of Saint Ours; "a church," says Viollet-le-Duc, "unique in the world—a monument of a savage and a strange beauty." It was the nucleus about which the city grew, its foundation having been laid as far back as

the fifth century, but the present church was built some six hundred years later. It is preceded by a deep porch, which leads to the main entrance, remarkable for its magnificent archivolt, sculptured with queer figures of saints and allegorical animals and emblems. The first bay of the nave forms an interior vestibule and is surmounted by a massive tower, whose upper story is octagonal in form with a stone pyramidal steeple. The nave, properly speaking, has but two square bays, each roofed by a huge octagonal pyramid without window openings. One can imagine the effect of an interior thus strangely vaulted. These immense hollow pyramids, entirely *dark* at their summits, give a feeling of indefinable terror. A fourth pyramid, surrounded by four small belfries, crowns the square central tower, and around this tower are grouped the short transepts and the apse. The glimpse of the interior as seen from the porch is strange indeed. The dark nave serves as a frame to the centre of the church, which is bathed in a ghostly white light, while behind it is seen the apse lighted by rose-coloured windows.

The entire upper city is tunnelled with miles of subterranean passages connecting the château, the

church, the donjon, and the walls. As one walks through the winding, twisting streets of this strange *ville haute*, black openings suddenly yawn at one's feet, or one looks into mysterious passages whose ends are lost in obscurity—remains of hidden plots and intrigues. The deep moats are now filled with stables and houses or are planted with rows of linden trees. They say that the entire hill upon which Loches is built is honeycombed by enormous quarries, from which building stone was taken. I myself walked through two miles of them, and all along the path innumerable tunnels opened to right and left. One can thus go down even as far as the lower city, where one still finds old houses of the Renaissance and two of the beautiful gates of the outer wall.

LIMOGES AND ITS ENAMELS

LIMOGES AND ITS ENAMELS

WE had been enjoying Limoges for a day or two. As it was not by any means our first visit, we had only been reviewing our favourite points of interest. We had descended the narrow depths of the Rue de la Boucherie, one of the queerest relics of mediævalism that I know of in France to-day—a street uniquely composed of butcher shops whose open fronts display all manner of horrid spectacles and in whose depths one catches glimpses of quaint old women in broad white coifs talking with men in bloody aprons. Every attempt to better the sanitary condition of this old thoroughfare has foundered against the obstinacy of this same butchers' corporation.

Then we had crossed over the Vienne by the New Bridge to enjoy the view back upon the city—the view that Balzac dwells upon with such evident pleasure in his "Curé de Village": the broad hill rising in

an amphitheatre from the river's bank, mounting among the terraces and arbours of the tranquil Jardin de l'Evêché, where the good bishop sat under the trellis enjoying his grapes in the hush of the summer evening, to the spacious building of the seminary above, nestled amid the massive verdure of the upper terraces, the whole group dominated by and forming a pedestal, as it were, to the great bulk of Saint Etienne, buttressed, pinnacled, and culminating in the massive cathedral tower.

We had paused before many ancient shops (for many yet remain in the crooked street of the lower town), with their carved corner-posts and heavily beamed ceilings, and had recalled Veronique and her Auvergnat of a father selling his scrap-iron in their sombre depths.

And then we had climbed up to the cathedral and stood lost in admiration before the wonderful *jube* that blocks the west end of the nave. What a gem of the Renaissance it is! Each delicate pilaster with its exquisite reliefs and figurines, each extraordinary panel of the "Works of Hercules" (a queer subject, by the way, for an organ loft), is a small *chef d'œuvre*, while the templed canopies above the "Cardinal Vir-

tues" and the balustrade that surmounts the whole design are a triumph of delicate architecture.

Rue de la Boucherie, Limoges

While we were enjoying it, I remembered some beautiful enamels by Laudin that we had seen in the

sacristry on a former visit, so we walked down the church to ring the bell and examine them again.

Our summons brought a queer, misshapen creature, a hunchback with twisted legs. He did not open the door, but in response to our inquiry merely said:

"They are not here. They were stolen."

"When?" I asked.

"About a week ago, and as yet we have no clew."

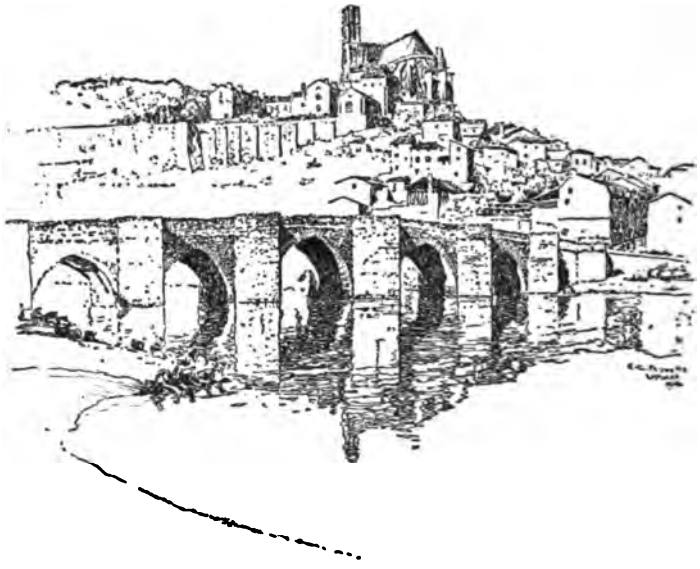
So here I was brought face to face with one of those church robberies that have, unhappily, become so rife in France since the separation of the Church and State. When the state took over the churches and made them national instead of ecclesiastical property, it also took over the works of art they contained and had them carefully catalogued. Since then, whether from negligence or ignorance, the clergy have failed to keep their usual watchful eye upon these art objects, and bands of thieves have recently sprung up who make a specialty of church robberies. It has been proven beyond a doubt (as in the case of Thomas, who has been brought to justice), that these robbers are in league with dealers in antiques, who tell them where they can find booty worthy their mettle.

LIMOGES AND ITS ENAMELS

The precious little Limoges enamels have been especially singled out, their rarity, their infinitesimal weight and size, and their great value peculiarly indicating them for theft. Last year the famous reliquary of Ambazac was stolen and its priceless enamels scattered. This year came robberies at Aubazine, Bort, Uzerche, and Saint Viance. The reliquary stolen from the last-named village church was afterward found abandoned in a hedgerow by the roadside; that is to say, its inner mahogany box was found, a box made less than a century ago to place the rotten old one. It still contained, in a white satin bag duly sealed and signed by the bishop who made the transfer, the relics of the saint intact. But the brass covering, enamelled and gilded—the precious work of art—was gone forever, departed for some collection in a foreign land. The thieves knew their business well.

And, lest I seem to exaggerate the importance of their theft, let me state that for this very reliquary, the maker of the wonderful Spitzer collection, the indefatigable Mr. Spitzer himself, had offered, as long ago as 1877, no less than two hundred and thirteen thousand francs!

Lovers of art about Limoges are up in arms, and well they may be, for nothing can replace these precious little boxes which, in the space of a few inches,



Pont Saint Etienne, Limoges

resume the highest expression of one of the most beautiful arts of the middle ages. They tremble, too, for the treasure of Conques down in the Aveyron, shut up in a little country church with nothing but worm-eaten locks and bars to protect it. At Paris, in 1900, I had the pleasure of examining the figure of

Sainte Foy, which forms part of this collection and which was sent to the exposition to sit in unique splendour in a special case—a marvellous work of art whose face, enamelled, fixed, brilliant, has the inscrutable solemnity and mystery of a Fate for whom the Sphinx holds no secret. Emeralds, pearls, sapphires, antique cameos, and rare enamels add lustre to its garment; its ear-rings are among the most beautiful jewels that the French middle ages have left us; and at this same exposition a well-known collector offered two hundred thousand francs for the golden agrafe set with sapphires that closes its collar! May this work of art be spared from the vandals' hand!

The sacristan seemed to have no further information to give—only the usual story of the robbers getting in the window at night—so, disappointed, we wandered off to the new museum to enjoy the precious little room there devoted to enamels and see the Pénicauds, with their gamuts of turquoise and amethyst, the Courteys, replete with the spirit of the Renaissance, and the more decadent though still beautiful Nouailhers and Laudins.

It was away back in the middle of the tenth century (or even earlier, for the reliquary of Pepin the

Short at Conques is said to date from the year 817) that the people of Limoges first began to make enamels.

The earliest are in cloisonné—gold plates with the parts to be enamelled cut out of the solid metal. This being a very slow and costly process—for it demanded exclusively the precious metal, as brass could not be worked fine enough—it was soon replaced, as the number of churches increased (each rivalling its neighbour in the magnificence of its reliquaries, chalices, and pyxes) by the *émaille champlevè*.

Those made at Limoges are easily recognisable by the predominance of a deep lapis-blue (the same colour, curiously enough, that distinguishes so much of the Sèvres porcelain), while the enamellers at Le Mans and in Germany used more green and yellow. To this early epoch belong most of the enamels to whose theft I have alluded. They are the rarest and most precious. Of this period the Louvre possesses the wonderful so-called Châsse of Charlemagne, and the Cluny, the reliquary of Sainte Fausta, and several beautiful croziers and chalices.

Toward the end of the fifteenth century there arose in Limoges a man who revolutionised the art of en-

amelling and made it a painter's craft instead of a goldsmith's. Unlike his predecessors, who only enamelled certain portions of their metal surface, he used the entire plate for the painting of pictures with vitrifiable pigments and in his art exercised so rare a sense of decoration, restraint, and simplicity—qualities all that belonged to his epoch—that he has maintained his place at the head of his art despite the more complicated and highly finished efforts of his successors.

The "Calvary" in the Cluny Museum is, perhaps, Nardon Pénicaud's masterpiece. Reproductions of it show only its fine design, but in no way convey either the depth or beauty of its colour nor the glow of the background of deepest lapis sown with golden fleur-de-lis on which the costumes of the figures play a gamut of blues and greens shading into winey browns in deep and sombre hues leaving the spots of flesh brilliantly white. The heads and hands are slightly raised—a characteristic feature of this master's work obtained by putting on the glassy white pigment in thicker quantities.

In the Gallery of Apollo in the Louvre, Nardon Pénicaud is represented by three magnificent trip-

tychs and by a circular "Coronation of the Virgin" again all in purple, blue, and green of strange dignity of expression, and remarkable, above all things, for the wonderful celestial blue of its background studded with golden stars. In cases between the windows of this same gallery the whole art of enamelling may be studied, early and late. Pénicaud left four members of his family to follow him, no one of them quite equalling him, however. In fact, each of the great Limousin artists seems to have founded a family of enamellers. There were the five Pénicauds, Jean and Pierre Courteys, who infused into it the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, the de Courts, the long list of Nouailhers, and the Laudins, who carried the art on for centuries until it became debased and moribund in the eighteenth century.

It has recently been revived with real success. Just after the Année Terrible, when the Commune had devastated Paris, two young enthusiasts, by patient study, mastered the secrets of the old enamellers, and though one, Louis Dalpayrat, died some years ago, the other, Ernest Blancher, still lives in Limoges, where he executes with great care and taste important commissions for patrons from all over the world.

I found him away off in a backwater of the town where a residential suburb merges into the open country.

Ox Cart

My ring at the garden gate was answered by a neat little servant whom we followed through quiet paths where no dust of the city traffic nor hum of the city noise ever penetrates. To the left a green-shuttered

house, nestled among vines and overshadowing branches, adjoined a studio in a separate building opening directly from the garden.

There we found Mr. Blancher at his table. He greeted us charmingly, and we soon merged into a long talk upon the fascinating mysteries of his art. For it is, indeed, an art apart with difficulties all its own to surmount. He showed us a series of a dozen plates that he is executing for a corporation in Birmingham, all in different states of completion and so displaying the various stages of the long processes of enamelling. In them he has been inspired by the methods and designs of Nardon Pénicaud, whom he confesses to be his beau ideal of enamellers, but he has at times executed a number of works from paintings by Lefebvre and other modern masters, besides completing some very interesting impressionistic landscapes done directly from nature.

He buys his coloured glass in large lumps, which he grinds down himself to a fine powder. His copper-plate, made slightly concave to resist the heat, has been prepared much as an etcher prepares his. Then, by means of a tracing, he places leaves of gold or silver on the spots and garments that he wishes to hold

special lustre—an old process creating a wonderful radiation of light through the glass covering and imparting life, depth, and warmth to the figures. The big tones are then applied in flat silhouettes and the flesh spots painted a purplish black. After this the shadows are indicated and then the flesh slightly modelled, as I have before stated, in thick white, whose shading is made by allowing the under blacks to show through where required.

Each of these operations is a long process, for the glass powder can only be applied in infinitesimal quantities and with the greatest care. After each stage of the painting the plate must be fired in the oven over in a corner of the studio. An hour and a half is required to heat it to the requisite temperature of a thousand degrees centigrade. The plate is then put into this terrific heat and the fusion of the glass particles is almost instantaneous. The artist must exercise the greatest precaution against dust and keep everything tightly shut in glass cases except the one plate he is working upon, for dust is his greatest enemy. For this reason Ernest Blancher's atelier, removed in its quiet garden, suits his purpose to perfection.

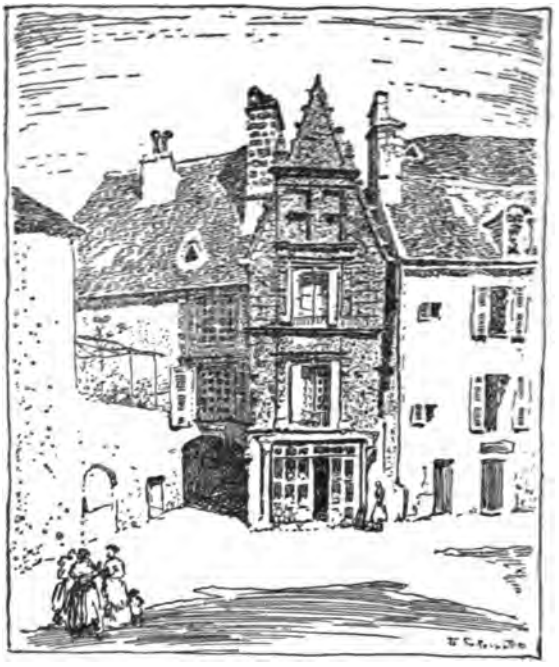
I am sure this studio would delight the heart of any old Dutch master with its wealth of detail, its finished and unfinished plates glowing in their cases, its quaint brick kiln, its jars of prismatic colours ranged along the shelves, its work-table, set with cups of colour, with a silver flood of light pouring from the great sky-light down upon the quiet enthusiast himself seated at his table in his sombre clothes and flowing tie.

IN THE LAND OF THE TROUBADOURS

IN THE LAND OF THE TROUBADOURS

JUST south of Limoges, in the Périgord, on the line that connects Périgueux itself to Brive, still stands the fine old castle of Hautefort, crowning a rocky height and commanding a far-reaching panorama. In this eyrie, remodelled into a spacious château at a later day, was born the famous troubadour Bertrand de Born, whose rôle in the history of the twelfth century was a conspicuous one. He was the most complete expression of the epoch in which he lived—a typical troubadour, son of the land that placed the pretty arts of verse-making on a par with valour in feats of arms. Nothing was sacred to him. Family ties counted as naught. Twice he drove his own brother from his castle that he might himself remain sole lord. Through his intrigues he arrayed Prince Henry of England against his unhappy father, and induced the young English princes to wage their parricidal wars.

Dante pictures him in hell wandering about carrying his head severed from his body. When Ber-



House at Sarlat where Etienne de la Boëtie was born

trand approached the rock whereon the poet stood, he raised on high his head, held like a lantern at arm's-length, that his words might better be heard, and thus he spoke:

"Thou who, still in the world of the living, comes to view the dead, behold my sorry plight! That thou mayest carry news of me back to earth, know that I am that Bertrand de Born who gave evil counsel to the young king. I made father and son enemies. And for the reason that I separated two beings so closely linked by nature, I now carry, alas, my brain separated from its motive which is the remainder of my body."

His poems were remarkable for their fire and violence, sometimes satirical, directed against the barons, sometimes martial, in honour of his royal friend Richard Cœur de Lion (it was Bertrand that dubbed him Richard Yea and Nay—oc e no), and sometimes amorous, in honour of the lady of his heart, Maenz, wife of Talleyrand de Périgord and daughter of the Viscount of Turenne.

This latter nobleman was, perhaps, the best-known patron of the troubadours, and at his castle, two of whose giant towers we visited not long ago, topping a hill just south of Brive, poets were always sure of a welcome.

Bertrand was the type of the more northern or Limousin school of minstrelsy, virile, strong, and con-

trasting sharply with the bards of the southland who, cradled in a more enervating air, sang a sweeter song. Such was the "tres gaye compagnie des sept troubadours de Tolose et mainteneurs du gay scavoir," protected by the powerful counts of Toulouse.

At this city in the Capitole, the Académie des Jeux Floraux, as it is called, still holds a meeting in the Salle de Clemence Isaure every three years, on May 3d, to contest for poetical prizes: a golden amaranth, a silver violet, wild rose, and marigold—laurels highly prized by the Gascon bards.

Richard the Lion Heart, friend of poets and himself a minstrel of no mean talents, spent much of his turbulent youth in this his duchy of Guyenne, and the whole country teems with recollections of him. At Martel his elder brother died penitent just after he had sacked the rich sanctuaries of Rocamadour near by to pay his Brabançons—a fact to which many of the faithful attributed his untimely end. And at the castle of Chalus, just beyond Limoges, Richard received his own death wound from the bow of Bertrand de Gourdon.

At all the castles in the valley lands and on the craggy hill tops tales of him are told, his hair-breadth

On every crag is perched a feudal castle

escapes, his magnanimity to his enemies, and his loyalty to his friends forming the theme of many a tra-

The mediæval vision of Begnac seated on its proud cliff

dition. His friends, too, were all devotion to him. Is it not told of Blondel de Nesles, another poet of Lan-

guedoc, that he searched all Germany for his royal comrade when he was the captive of Leopold of Austria, and finally found him by singing a romance that they had composed together—a pleasing fiction, to be sure, but not altogether substantiated by history.

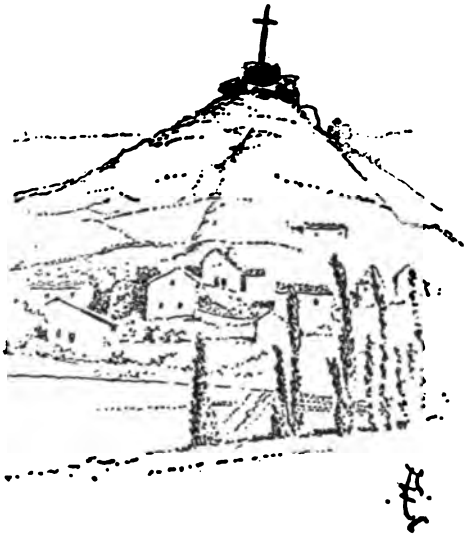
. . . . . .

It is a very interesting country, this land of the troubadours, and surprisingly little known.

To one who is accustomed to think of France only as "sunny France," who pictures but the broad pastures of Normandy, the smiling beaches of Deauville and Dinard, the vineyards of Burgundy, the rich gardens of Touraine, the sunshine of the Midi, it would be a revelation, indeed, to traverse this south-west portion of the country—this *pays perdu* of the Limousin, the Périgord, the Cantal, and the Quercy.

From the mountains of Auvergne—the little Switzerland of France—a plateau, vast and monotonous, stretches westward and southward, silent, wild, and savage to-day as it was in the middle ages. Heather and ferns, birches and chestnuts, cover its hillsides. In the distance the mountains of Auvergne, forbidding and gloomy, profile their jagged barrier, rising and falling in peaks and domes. Here and there

little lakes and swamp lands impart a sweetly melancholy note. Tiny streams issuing from these ponds cut for themselves narrow beds, deeper and deeper, through the ledges, finally swelling into torrents



"Vers"

rushing in cascades down slaty gorges. Little by little these cañons enlarge to form a vast granite plateau once the bed of the Jurassic Sea, but now constituting the drear reaches of the Causse, sadder even than the upper Segala—a rocky table-

land dried by the ardent sun and dotted only here and there with stunted oaks whose roots cling for life in the crevices. Its sole water-courses flow in a subterranean world, and can only be seen at the risk of one's life by descending into deep caverns whose narrow orifices open below into great halls polished by running waters and into chambers hung with stalactites reflected in murky pools.

Now and then a dolmen silhouettes its dark profile against the sky where the wild thyme perfumes the evening air. Human habitations are rare indeed. Great herds of sheep graze in these treeless plains, and they and the truffles for which the country is famous are the only riches of the *caoussenaous*—the peasants.

Into this Causse, in its savage splendour, rivers formed by these subterranean water-courses have now worn deep furrows which in time become valleys forming a happy contrast with their fertile fields and broad sheets of water reflecting tall files of poplars and giving life to villages crude and barbarous, it is true, but replete with vestiges of other days.

On every surrounding cliff or crag is perched a feudal castle or a pilgrim church. Franks and Visi-

goths, dukes of Aquitaine and lords of England, one after the other, have despoiled these river valleys to be followed by even more disastrous religious wars that tore brother from brother and drove peasants and villagers alike to refuge in fortified caves that are still to be seen loopholed in the cliffs on every hand.

Each succeeding master left his impress upon the land: a Gallic fort near Vers; a Roman arch of Diana at Cahors; relics of feudalism in castles, such as Beynac and Laroque, of the Renaissance, in superb châteaux like Cénevriers.

But here the story ends. Three centuries have elapsed and scarcely left a trace. The ruins are there, standing as on the morrow of their devastation, among rocks whose reddish tints at sunset seem still to reflect the glare of conflagration and along the banks of rivers whose saffron-tinted waters still seem to roll their floods of mud and blood.

At each turn of the road, and there are many, a new point of interest presents itself, now a ruined watch-tower perched solitary upon a hill top, now a giant crucifix planted upon a jagged rock, now an ancient church or dismantled castle with its vassal town clustered round its grass-grown moat, and ever and anon

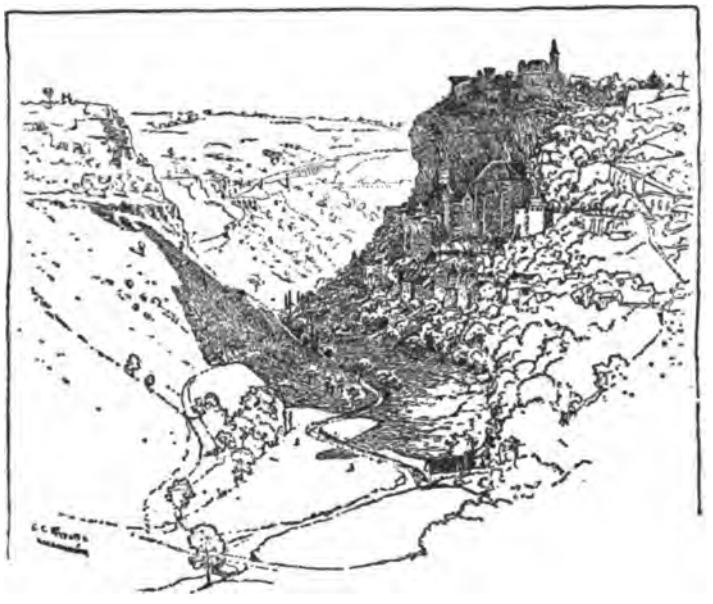
glimpses of smiling meadows hemmed in by walls of oölite and enriched by meanderings of the ruddy-watered rivers.

All is smiling where the Dordogne rolls its waters through a valley which is so easily reached by rail from Bordeaux, yet so seldom visited.

Stop first at Saint Emilion. From the station you will see nothing. But climb the hill and you will discover for yourself, unknown to tourists, as quaint an old town as you can find in many a long wandering —a town of war-like aspect whose dismantled ramparts, pierced by numerous breaches; whose crumbling walls encircled by wide moats, evoke a past filled with struggle and bloody combat. You will find, too, within its gates, its royal castle and quaint old houses and rock-paved streets, but besides it will reserve for you a unique surprise hidden away in the very bowels of the earth, its existence only betrayed by a Gothic portal and some mullioned windows.

Yet enter this portal and you find yourself in an immense monolithic church which the has been pronounced "the most singular in France and quite unique in the world." And truly I know of none like it, with its nave and aisles, its apse and altars,

its huge square pillars and soaring arches dug from the living rock way back in the dark ages by the patient hands of persevering monks, disciples of the



The Shadowy vale of Rocamadour

saint who lived and died in the cave hard by. Six windows pierced in the hillside project into its aisles a pale, uncertain light which, before reaching the farthest extremities, is so attenuated that the arches cross in darkness and the eye can scarcely

discern the altars rising in their shadowy niches and the tombs in their darksome chapels.

But a little beyond Saint Emilion, through the rich vineyards of the Bordeaux district, lies Bergerac—indelibly connected with Cyrano, "the demon of bravery"—made near and dear to all of us so recently by a troubadour of our own day. It is a pretty, smiling village, set in gardens hung with wistaria, and spreading its sunny quays along the river banks, very prosperous indeed, and quite bourgeois-looking—in no way recalling the peppery poet-swordsman.

Then the valley narrows, hemmed in by crags ribbed in courses like the massive rustic basements of giant castles. The houses throw up their roofs to steeper angles so the snow may slide away. We cross bridge after bridge over the meanders of the river, thrown from side to side by its rocky walls, and thread as many tunnels; then pass Saint Cyprien, climbing its steep hill slope with cypresses leading in line to its church, and then, at twilight, come upon the mediæval vision of Beynac seated on its proud cliff, as perfect a type of feudal keep as one could hope to see.

We were to spend the night at Sarlat, and as we drove down the dark hill slopes from the station to the

town, with the deep shadows of overhanging trees about us, I remembered that I had heard somewhere that wolves still abound in the vicinity and that not so very long ago one was killed in the streets of the town.

Sarlat is a fine old place with sombre, twisting streets lined with splendid stone houses, whose tall turrets and high-pitched slate roofs, and whose Gothic portals leading to spiral stairways evoke the heyday of its prosperity—the time of Louis XII and his immediate successors—perfect object lessons of the domestic architecture of the middle ages.

Here we were fairly in the land of the troubadours, and discovered on a pillar of the old city hall, freshly placed there (1908), the inscription:

AUX TROUBADOURS ELIAS CAIREL, AIMERIC DE SARLAT, GIRAULT DE SALIGNAC, LOU BOURNAT BÓU PÉRIGORD

Poets all of the Limoges school. This plaque was put up at a recent reunion of the Félibres, poets and writers of the Gascony country—the direct inheritors of the troubadours.

Sarlat has other claims to literary laurels. In a charming house fronting the cathedral church and

dating from the time of Francis I, Etienne de La Boëtie, Montaigne's lifelong friend, was born. The old town makes a charming centre for excursions. In the near vicinity lie the castles of Montfort and Fénelon, the latter, birthplace of many members of that illustrious house, remaining to-day a perfect specimen, intact, of a fifteenth-century stronghold.

Beyond lies Souillac, to which we made a special pilgrimage to see its byzantine church and the curious pillars of the west door adorned with sculptures of the greatest rarity, naïve, archaic in drapery and movement, and reminiscent only of the crude efforts of Northmen or the rude carvings of the Assyrians.

Beyond Souillac the Dordogne describes a sweeping bend around the Cirque de Montvalent, whose steep palisades, rising sheer from the river's bank, form a vast amphitheatre sheltering a number of picturesque old towns. Here lies Martel, where Prince Henry died of a fever in a house still pointed out and adorned with the leopards of England. And in the depths of these cliffs of Montvalent, which shore up the Causse de Gramat, lies the shadowy vale of Rocamadour, with its forgotten pilgrimage sleeping the sleep of the centuries.

A FORGOTTEN PILGRIMAGE

A FORGOTTEN PILGRIMAGE

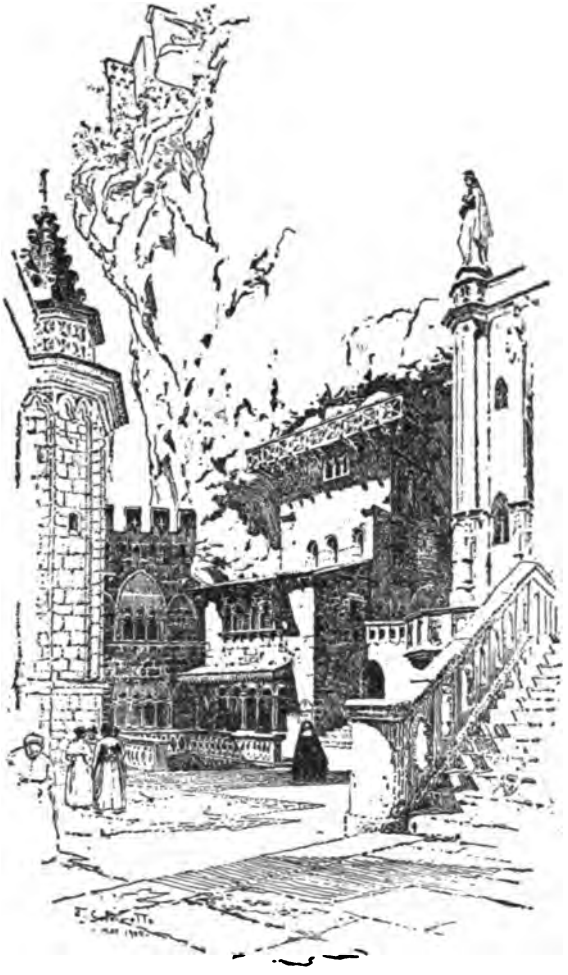
THE Causse de Gramat is a rocky waste quite devoid of human habitation—here a little farm-house and there a primitive village, and if you asked how much the land was worth you would be answered, "Oh, about two francs a dog's run!" Its silence is that of the desert, save toward evening, when the stillness is broken by a long, far-away rumbling. This sound, strange as the country itself, is produced by the moving about of countless flocks of tawny-coloured sheep, with manes like lions, which graze among the little patches of stubby grass, carrying at their necks the *eskillo*—a heavy, cracked bell with a wild and uncouth note.

The horizon of the Causse is boundless. Now and then a dolmen is encountered and makes us think, as the evening shadows thicken, that white-bearded Druids will still meet here, and in the pale light of the moon offer their sacrifices and sing their psalms.

Suddenly, without a warning, in the midst of this wilderness, a chasm yawns at our feet—a huge cañon opens in the granite rock and a picture without parallel is presented to our astonished eyes. Far below is a shaded valley verdant with soft grasses and wooded with sycamores and beeches—the quiet valley of Rocamadour, so deep and so narrow that only the sun of mid-day penetrates to its green fields, while its trees grow tall and slender in their effort to reach the life-giving light.

It is impossible to describe the suddenness of the transition, the surprise of this unforseen oasis after the barren stretches and rocky reaches of the upper Causse. A river, the rippling Alzou, winds its long curves through this smiling valley, disappearing a moment under the briar bushes, only to appear again farther on near the tall poplars and dainty birches. But great cliffs hem in this charming Eden, and one precipitous rock, larger than all the rest, turns its scarred and battered face toward the rising sun.

Midway up its rugged sides clings a mass of masonry, square, buttressed, with steep slate roofs—more a fortress than a church—the shrine of Saint Amadour. No railroad's shriek, no tourist's caravan,



The Chapels

come to break the stillness of this far-away sanctuary, and its secret is to-day known only to the humble peasants who come to climb its holy stairs and bend the knee before the Black Virgin.

This is Rocamadour, the oldest and once the most venerated pilgrimage in all of France, visited by Saint Louis himself and many of his royal successors. By them its altars were enriched and its chapels built, and pilgrims came in thousands to participate in its miracles. But succeeding ages saw its glory fade, though even now, in our own generation, much has been done to restore its ancient grandeur.

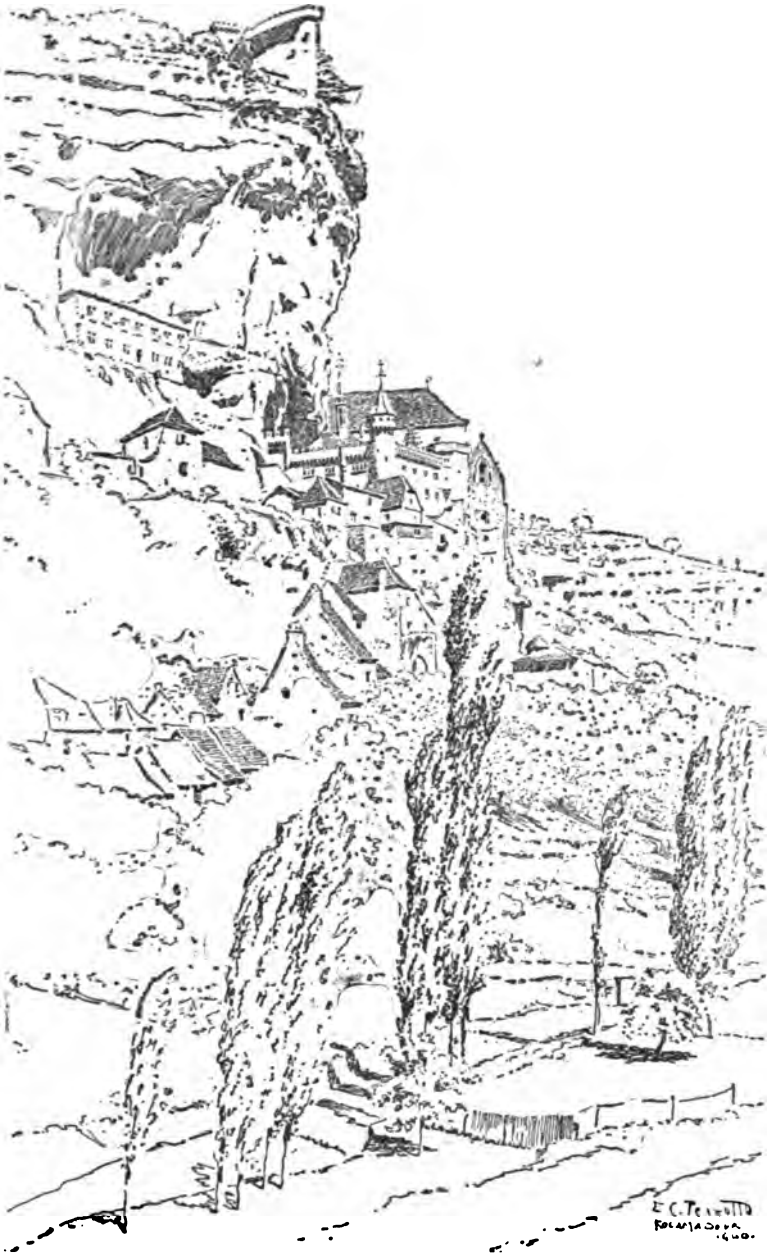
A long, winding road gradually descends and brings us from the level of the upper plateau down to the village, which hugs the great rocks under the very foundation-stones of the sanctuaries. This road ends under a huge sycamore, whose base is encircled by a broad stone seat and whose spreading branches shelter a mossy stone crucifix. Here, in this little *place* overlooking the valley, the peasants gather in the cool of the afternoon, when the frowning mountains cast their long shadow far down over the valley. Here, too, is the blacksmith, and here we may see the patient oxen shod. We enter the town through a forti-

Procession on Ascension Day

fied gate—one of the four which still span the road, once its means of defence—and then find ourselves in the single village street, so narrow that two waggons cannot pass, though such a necessity never arises in Rocamadour! A few little shops, a so-called café, a couple of comfortable hostelries contribute all the life there is in the little town.

Midway between the two outer gates rises a broad stone staircase, which leads to the sanctuaries above. Many penitents climb these two hundred steps on their knees, repeating an "Ave" on each step. We saw a party of six, five women and a man, doing this pious duty; the women kneeling, but the man, too old and stiff to bend the knee, could but stand and join in the responses.

A turn at the top of the stairs and we pass between rows of shops in which holy mementoes and souvenirs are sold. Now we find ourselves in front of a great Gothic doorway with a group of beggars before it. A massive oaken double door, studded with huge nails and strengthened with bands of wrought iron, opens and gives access to a second staircase, which tunnels its way under the dark foundation arches of one of the largest buildings. Venders of rosaries and



Rocamadour from the River Alzon

crucifixes sit upon the steps knitting or talking to the pilgrims as they toil upward. A burst of light, a peep of blue sky above our heads, and we find ourselves in the *parvis*, surrounded on all sides by chapels.

Before ten a chorus of ringing bells fills the air, echoed by the bare cliffs on the opposite side of the cañon, and the echo is thrown back, only to be caught up again by a lustier ringing. The deep bells of the sanctuaries are chorded by the higher, clearer notes of the chiming from the nunnery. The sisters in long, black gowns descend the narrow path, the women in the village stop their work and begin climbing the long steps, muttering an "Ave Maria" and fingering their rosaries. The beggars take their accustomed places, arrange the placards about their necks, and jingle a sou in their tin cups as we pass. The bells swell in chorus and the rocks of the overhanging cliffs grumble back the tones. White-capped peasants bent double with age, old men in short blue blouses, young women in ribboned bonnets, brothers in long black gowns, and sisters in their flowing veils, enter the open door of the sanctuary and disappear in the darkness.

Rocamadour

The bells cease their chiming. The great doors are closed, and there falls a hushed silence as the last vibrating murmur of the ringing ceases.

The beadle in his gorgeous costume of scarlet and gold paces back and forth on the upper balustrade—a guardian of peace—and the poor dog with his tail between his legs, who would follow his master to the very altar's foot, is hunted away by a gesture and a half-suppressed "*va-t-en.*"

I glanced about me at the chapels of the *parvis*, which form an irregular rectangle, their entrances on different levels. In front and up a short flight of steps is the chapel of the Virgin—a square Gothic edifice, whose corner is adorned with a delicate tourelle surmounted by a large figure of the Virgin. Near the entrance, painted on the exterior wall, is a strange old "Dance of Death," and near it, before entering the sanctuary, the peasants remove their hats and sing a quaint old *cantique*. The rough granite rocks form the entire west wall of the Virgin Chapel, and lighted candles of all sizes (votive offerings of pilgrims) are placed flaring against the uncut stone. The interior is full of mystery—dimly lighted and strangely disfigured by the irregularities of the jagged

rock. The decorations add to the mystic effect—rich and deep in colour, with much ornament and gilding. High above the altar, enshrined in a canopy of gilt bronze, is the miracle-working statue of the Virgin and Child magnificently clothed, and said to have been carved in the first century by Saint Amadour or Zaccheus, who founded the sanctuary.

From this chapel a small door gives access to the Church of Saint Sauveur, the great square pile which is so conspicuous when seen at a distance. Its interior is grandly spacious and decorated with mementoes of the visits of many royal personages—Saint Louis, Charles IV, Louis XI, and others. Below this church, cut in the rock, is another of equal dimensions, the Chapel of Saint Amadour.

And now the voices in the church join in an anthem, the doors are thrown wide open, and a contented, God-fearing people form in groups as they come out. The gossips of the village vend their bit of news, the sisters speak a word of encouragement to the mothers, the brothers talk to their flock in merry groups or pause to bless a newly bought rosary or religious memento. I noticed among these chaplains one, conspicuous by his round, good-humoured face and

merry, dancing eyes, who seemed always surrounded by an eager group of devoted listeners. With his arm about one boy and his hand upon another's head, Monsieur Bonhomme (for so was he aptly named) was quite the ideal picture of a spiritual father. Soon, little by little, the place resumed its wonted, peaceful quietude.

A long, dark passage leads from the *parvis* to a strongly fortified gate, strengthened with all of feudal military art—crenelations, *mâchicoulis*, portcullis, and drawbridge The soldiers in the château above could reach the defences of this gate without being seen by the enemy, by means of a stairway of more than two hundred steps cut in the living rock. They could thus bear aid in the defence of the sanctuaries and of the treasures which they contained, during the long wars of the Middle Ages, when the whole country was infested with roving bands of lawless soldiers. To-day the stairs are only used by the brothers, descending from the clergy-house above, by aid of flickering candles, to repeat their matins and vespers.

In front of the great gateway ascends the *Chemin de la Croix*, a long, zigzag road with, at each turning,

one of the fourteen stations, in the form of a little chapel, while at the end, on top of the great cliff, is a mighty wooden cross.

We are now on a level with the old château, the present residence of the chaplains, and recently remodelled. It still retains, however, an ancient square tower and the old battlements. We may climb these latter to the *Chemin de Ronde*, and enjoy the magnificent panorama that spreads out at our feet. In three directions stretch the undulations of the interminable Causse, wilderness upon wilderness, cut here and there with long lines of stone fences. But as I looked over the fourth side, I caught my breath at the fearful drop into the valley below, and a cold, nervous shiver ran up my spine. I recall but one similar sensation, and that was when I peeped over the overhanging side of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The eye becomes dizzy as it plunges down to the roofs of Spanish tile and chimney-pots far below—down, down into the fertile valley winding like a soft green river between its rocky walls, disappearing at the east as at the west in an abrupt turning of its course. Here on the battlements one may dream of times gone by, when the Sword went hand in

Crucifix in the Church of Saint Sauveur

hand with the Book and Belief was Strife. Now peace of conscience only reigns, and the low voices of the brothers come to us chanting the vespers, as the sun creeps behind the plateau throwing over the valley its long, forth-reaching shadows in a last embrace.

THE VALLEY OF THE LOT

THE VALLEY OF THE LOT

A LITTLE southward from Rocamadour, the Lot digs its way down from the mountains of Auvergne. With the intention of visiting its wild valley we left the train at Capdenac. A broad road, well paved as a city boulevard, lured us on—a road sometimes hewn in the solid rock, sometimes shored up on lofty viaducts, and at times tunnelling the hillsides, but always dominating the broad valley of the Lot, with its rows of stately poplars, its ripening fields and orchards, shut in on either hand by steep and jagged cliffs, rich and varied in colour, shading through the entire gamut of chrome, ochre, sienna, and russet brown.

And here, almost at the outset, we met our first "rabassiaire," with his pig, hunting for truffles. We knew we should find him hereabouts, for this, above all others, is his country.

In Provence truffles are good; they are better in Languedoc, Guyenne, and the Périgord, but the best

come from this very province of the Quercy, especially from the environs of Cahors—Lalbecque, Limogne, and Arcambal, being, as it were, the very Château Yquem of truffledom.

With his pig hunting for truffles

The search for this most precious of vegetable growths is the all-engrossing industry of the country —an ungrateful industry, too, fickle as the caprices of a woman. For ten or fifteen years a plantation may be good, and the "caussenard" who owns it may gain as much as four or five thousand francs a season —an enormous sum for the country. Then, little by little, the deposits grow less; the truffigène fly,

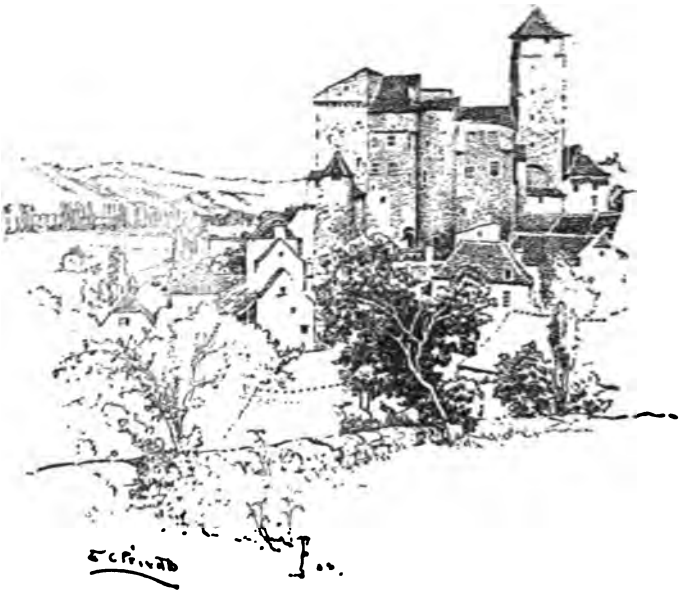
sure indicator of large bulbs, fails to appear, and the "caveur" or truffle-hunter's work is at an end.

Gone also is the occupation of the educated sow—the real "rabassiaire." Many animals are fond of truffles: the hare, the boar, and so is the dog, which is often trained to hunt them; but the real epicure, the animal who surely and quickly scents the dainty, is the pig, preferably the sow, which has been previously taught by hunting potatoes hidden in the ground with bits of truffle. When the pig's education is complete, a peasant leads it forth by a rope which he holds in one hand, while in the other he carries a pointed stick. As soon as the sow scents the dainty it becomes greatly agitated, quivering from head to foot, and starts to root, and then the peasant, rapping it sharply on the snout, quickly pulls it away and digs up the treasure. In Cahors, in Martel, and in Brive we saw important markets where truffles are the only commodity, and where the exchange of money from four to six on a Friday afternoon often amounts to ten or fifteen thousand francs.

We lunched at Cajarc, a dingy town topped by a picturesque old castle—a strange feudal conglom-

eration of towers, bastions, and curtain walls pierced by the tiniest of windows.

Of our *déjeuner* I remember but little, save that the hotel was most primitive; but that, perhaps, is true of



Cajarc

all inns in this forsaken country. Few and far between, indeed, are spots where the weary traveller may rest his head, as we were to find out for ourselves that very night.

All the afternoon we drove against a head wind, and, tired and hungry at last, at about six o'clock reached Tour de Faure, but there forgot all fatigue in the contemplation of the glorious picture that opened before us. From the river's banks, which here swing round in a wide circle, a giant cliff rises, sheer and perpendicular as the Tarpeian Rock. On top of this precipice a village hangs—Saint Cirq-la-Popie—dwellings clinging, lichen-like, to any chink in a rock; gardens wherever there is a tiny parcel of earth; houses, gateways, walls, and towers consolidating with the crags on which they stand, the whole crowned by a charming old abbey-church whose apse, backing out high above the river, mirrors itself in the waters hundreds of feet below.

My handbook of the Touring Club of France told us there was an inn at Saint Cirq-la-Popie; in fact, even gave the prices, which I thought were rather too moderate. As we crossed the river bridge we encountered a priest and with him a shabby-looking individual. To make assurance two times sure, I inquired if they knew of a good hotel in St. Cirq. The priest and his companion exchanged a quick glance, and perplexity was plainly written on their faces.

A hotel in St. Cirq? Who ever heard of such a thing? No, they surely knew of none.

"But," said I, "how about this 'Cheval Blanc' that my book tells of?"

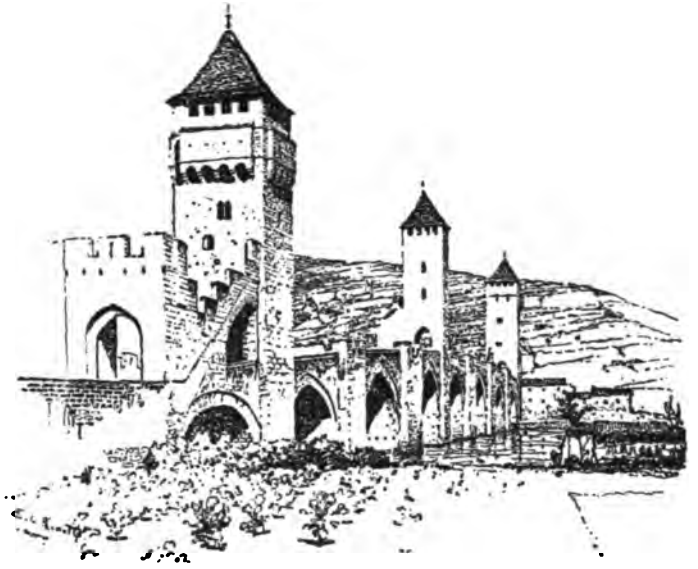
"Never heard of such a place," was the priest's reply. "The blacksmith has a room, I believe, but really, I think you would be better off down here by the station in that farm-house yonder."

The farm in question looked none too prepossessing, so, thanking the priest, we decided to mount the hill and search for the mythical "White Horse."

In the village, as on the bridge, no one seemed to know of it. We wandered about the twisting alleys for a while, wriggling between houses, rocks, and caves, until finally we came upon the blacksmith in his grimy shop, opening on a little square, smelling of burnt hoofs and leather. He readily consented to show us his room, and led us—two unwilling wayfarers—up a flight of steps at the back of the smithy. Half-way up we paused, our heads just above the flooring of an evil-odoured room, dark, grimy, dingy; a bed in one corner, a chimneypiece in another, with, upon it, a drunken row of half-emptied liquor bottles; a table in the centre and a settle at either side—

Saint Cirq-la-Popie

guest-chamber, cabaret, living-room, dining-room, and kitchen all in one. Where could one find a better picture of life in the middle ages?



Pont Valentré, Cahors

This was the room in question, and one glance was enough. We opted for the house far below by the railroad track. So down we went again to the farm by the river.

It was now seven o'clock and we were hungry and desperate. A woman received us at the high gate of

a spacious court-yard with stables and barns at one side, waggon-houses at the other, the inevitable manure pile with its brood of picking fowl in the centre, and the dwelling-house at the back.

Yes, she had room—her own room, in fact—that she would give up for the night. She showed it—none too lovely: colourless walls, a heavy beamed ceiling, a rough oak table whose greasy top plainly told that it frequently did duty at wedding-feasts, a bed with dingy curtains whose original colour and pattern had been obliterated by years of usage, a baby's crib with a child asleep within it!

If Monsieur and Madame would take a walk she would make all clean and prepare a dinner.

So at eight we sat down to a frugal meal, with the gruff voices of a crowd of men shouting politics in the next room over their glass of "petit bleu," and punctuating their arguments with many a resounding thump upon the table. This seemed likely to last all night.

When we went to our room with the feeble light of a single half-candle, we sat down in real despair. To be sure, the linen had been changed, the infant had disappeared, but oh! how we dreaded that old wooden bed with its dingy, shabby curtains!

Was nothing else to be done?

Then I remembered a smiling villa about a mile down the road smothered in flowers behind a high garden wall with fruit trees all about. If we went to the proprietor and explained our dilemma, might he

Barbreau and Tour des Pendus, Cahors

not know how to help us, or better still (and that was my secret hope), might he not take us in for the night?

So off we went and jingled the bell, which was answered in person by a kindly old gentleman whom we had seen taking his airing on the front steps. We stated our predicament and he, like the priest, remained perplexed. Finally he said: "I do know of

a nice room with some peasants—there down the road—the first big gate. Try it. Perhaps it may be vacant."

We entered a court hung with a grape-vine arbour, and in it, in the deepening twilight, we spied a woman —a giantess of mighty brawn, fit in figure, if not in face, to be a Brunhilde—balancing a horse-trough upon her head. As soon as she saw us, with a toss of her head she sent the unwieldy tub spinning into a corner, as if it had been a wicker basket, and quickly came forward to greet us.

To be sure she had a room—would we mount and see it?

An exterior staircase led to an upper porch whence a door gave access to a large chamber with three windows, a room possessing every advantage that the others had lacked: neat, with whitewashed walls and a rough but spotless floor; a cupboard with dishes in one corner; a chimney-piece decorated with a *bouquet de mariée* and tin-types of relatives mostly in soldier clothes; a bed with a fresh white coverlet knit by hand. Ah, here at last was a place to rest one's weary head! With no loss of time we went back to the public house, and with all possible delicacy (for

the woman had been kind and done her best) told her of our decision.

On awaking next morning, our coffee, the bread, and especially the butter, were so good that we decided to spend the morning sketching at St. Cirq and return to lunch. The memory of that luncheon remains with us still, prepared with care, served with daintiness, and accompanied by a light but fragrant wine. The menu was the peasant woman's and showed no great originality, but what can one expect in the markets of a *pays perdu?* Then the table was cleared, the crumbs brushed away, and a cup of aromatic coffee comforted our nerves while we feasted our eyes upon the broad expanse of sunlit country, the fields of ripening grain, the heavy-laden fruit trees, the ruddy cliffs and Saint Cirq daringly perched, like an edelweiss, over the deep abyss.

In the afternoon we were off to Cahors. Still high above the wanderings of the Lot, we passed Conduché Saint Géry, Vers with its giant cross, Savanac, Arcambal, Laroque-des-Arcs, each in its way an evocation of the middle ages, and then spied far off on the horizon a vision of Cahors, capital of the Cadurci, lying on its rolling peninsula, encompassed and moated by a loop of the Lot.

Nor does the spell of the impression lessen as we approach the fine old capital of the Quercy. Before entering, you swing all round the town unfolding in rapid succession its picturesque declivities, punctuated with mediæval ruins, and spreading its tree-grown boulevards along the quays.

We found Cahors worth visiting if for no other reason than its Pont Valentré—a splendid fourteenth-century bridge spanning the Lot to the west of the town.

I shall never forget the picture it presented one summer morning as we lounged in a garden by the river and watched a regiment of lancers troop across it, the horses neighing, the steel helmets flashing in the sunlight, the lances with fluttering pennants atilt at a thousand angles, like knights of old faring forth to battle.

THREE OLD HILL-TOWNS OF GASCONY

THREE OLD HILL-TOWNS OF GASCONY

I

CORDES

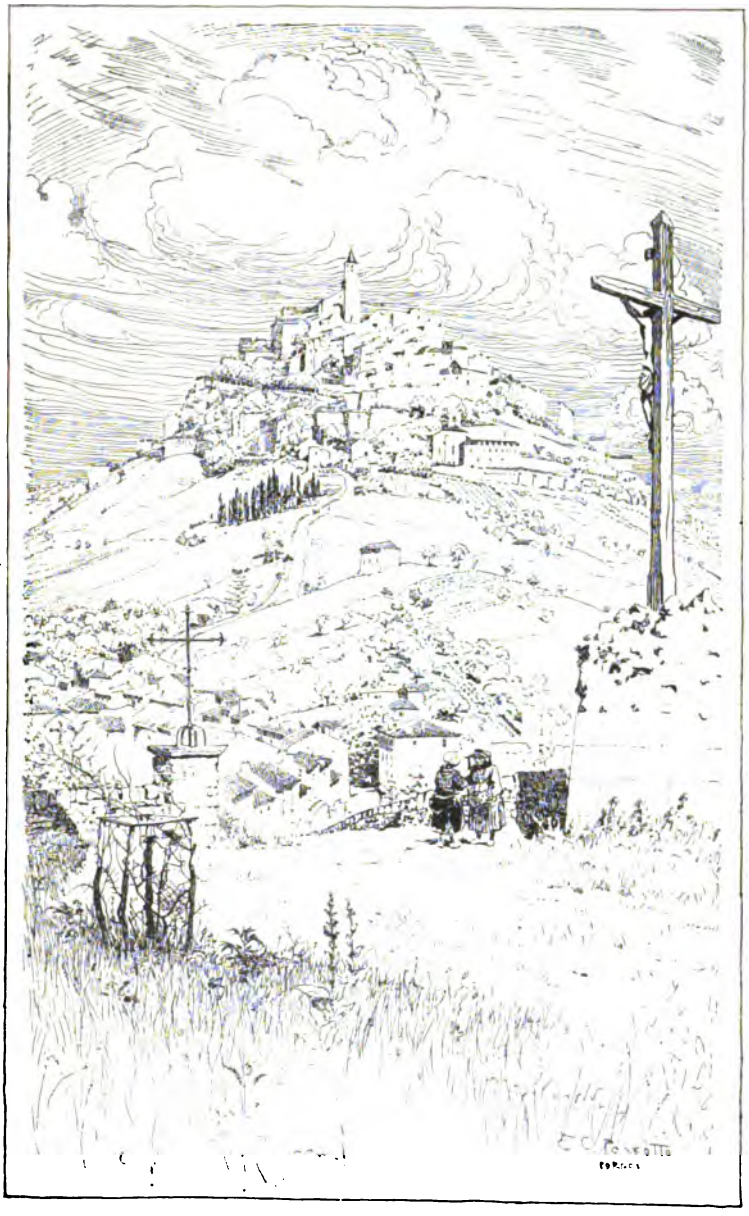
THE traveller on the road to Toulouse, just after passing through the wild valley of the Aveyron, if he keep a sharp look-out, will notice, in the distance to the left, rising above the intervening hills, a city, strangely perched on an isolated cone, piling upon the steep slopes its ruinous, red-roofed houses and bearing, like an aigrette, upon its summit, the belfry of its church. It is Cordes.

As we approach, its picturesqueness becomes more and more apparent, until, as the last rolling hillside is surmounted, the uniqueness of its situation and the strange contours of its masses of mediæval masonry are indeed remarkable.

Before us stretches a smiling, sunlit valley, perhaps three miles wide and as many long, through

which winds a swift-flowing river, the Céron. This valley is bounded on all sides by well-cultivated, gently sloping hillsides, rising in the form of an amphitheatre to the height of about four hundred feet. Just in the middle of this amphitheatre stands an abrupt hill, entirely isolated, its sharp declivity about the same on all sides, and on its top is perched the city of Cordes. How strange a site for a city, thus elevated above the land which forms its base, with its lowest walls raised to the level of the hill tops which bound the horizon, but separated from them by a natural moat, three hundred feet deep and a mile to two miles in breadth! Only one means of communication with the valley below is at first apparent—a steep, winding road, so steep as to be absolutely impassable for horses. We find afterward, however, that on the east side, the town has gradually descended the hillside by a zig-zag road and joined its suburb of La Bouteillerie in the valley below.

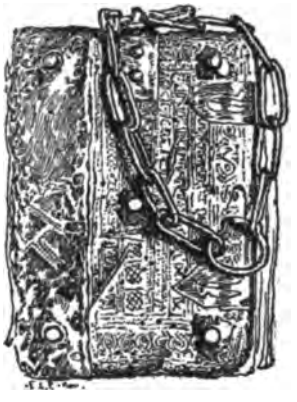
The reason for building a city in such a position is readily guessed. Cordes is old; its act of birth was written by Raymond VII, Count of Toulouse, in the early part of the thirteenth century, when he granted permission to the citizens of Saint Marcel, whose town



Cordes

near by had been pillaged over and again by roving bands of soldiers, to build upon this isolated hillside, whose natural defences are apparent even to the most unskilled eye.

The buildings were begun on the highest land, and important buildings they were too, for Cordes counted many wealthy citizens. To protect them, a great encircling wall was built, with two gates, both of which yet remain, though in ruins—one toward the west, the Porte des Houmets, the other facing the east, the Porte des Roux. Only two streets traverse the town between these gates, and in the centre, on the very apex of the hill, is the market-place. Here has always been the focus of the city life, and with this market-place most of the history of Cordes is connected.



The Book of Iron

Twelve years after the foundation of the city, when the Council of Toulouse had just established the Inquisition, Cordes saw three *frères prêcheurs* enter her walls, and a few days after an old woman was

burned for heresy in the market-place. Another execution was about to follow when the people arose, killed the inquisitors, and threw their bodies in the city well. The Pope, not receiving satisfaction for this misdeed, excommunicated the city, and it remained under his ban for nearly a hundred years, when a solemn ceremony was held and the Papal Bull was revoked. The Pope ordered the city well to be walled up, and an iron cross, which still stands near one of the pillars of the market-place, was erected over it, and to this day we read, on one of the flagstones near by, "*Ici est un puits de cent mètres de profondeur.*

During this stormy period in the life of Cordes, when her citizens showed such a strong will of their own, the *libré ferrat* (as it was called in *patois*) was written. It is an ancient book, written on parchment by the monks as only the monks could write, and engrossed with ornamental capitals and exquisite borders. It is bound in leather, richly tooled, and strengthened with nails and rivets, and with heavy iron corners and brass clasps. It was attached by means of a chain to one of the pillars of the market-place. Its first part consists of the Book of the Gospels, on which all oaths

were taken; then follow, in detail, the laws and customs of Cordes. The book was public property, and all—rich and poor alike—could consult it at any time and settle their disputes. As I fingered its well-thumbed pages with my friend the *archiviste*, he pointed out some of its curious clauses, written in the *patois*—a corruption of Spanish and French—which still prevails in the south-west of France. One, for instance, tells that at Christmas-tide, the heads, feet, and tail of all animals killed should revert as tithes to the lord of the manor.

A By-way

In the sixteenth century the market was roofed over. Twenty-four stone pillars were built to support the massive roof-beams, and until recently there was also a granary above. One of the pillars is hollow and

was used as a measure, the grain being let into it from the upper store-house, and when the column was full the purchaser filled his sack from a tap at the bottom. The market is smoothly paved in flagstones, and has always served as the place of meeting for local reunions, and now, to the tune of the flute and violin, the merry men and maidens, arm in arm, dance on the historic well, whose presence cost their forefathers such sore distress.

Saturday is market day. Then the peasants gather from all the country round, and toil up the steep hill to arrange their wares in and about the *place*. Here they barter and trade while the townsfolk lay in their weekly provision. Farmer's wives carry long white sacks into which they put their purchases, tying a knot over each article, so that finally the bag has the appearance of a long string of Frankfurt sausages. The country people bring well-filled baskets of luncheon, and at eleven o'clock regale themselves on good bread and cheese, a bottle of the sparkling wine of Gaillac, and a big piece of salted goose. The salted goose is a famous dish, and its abundance in Cordes is easily accounted for. *Pâté de foie gras* is a staple product, and of course necessitates the fattening and

killing of many geese. After the liver is removed the fowl must be put to some use, so the meat is salted, and really makes a very appetizing dish served with large, fresh brown beans.

After the busy hours of the market, quiet settles over the old town, and, as I sit sketching, I recognise the familiar sounds of the humdrum daily life: the trades-people working in their shops; the shuttle of the loom, as the weaver throws it back and forth—clack, clack as the frame falls after each thread is passed; the creak of the treadle as the wife winds the bobbin; the fall of the hammer as the shoemaker drives in each hobnail until the sole is quite covered and ready to aid some brave man or woman to climb the slippery, rock-paved streets; the sound of the saw, as old *père* Aurillac (who is ninety and bent double with the burden of his life) cuts in pieces the pile of wood which I watched him carry up the hill on his back—a load so large that it almost completely hid him for only his poor faltering feet were visible.

In the Grande Rue are most of the great houses—seven of them, all more or less similar in style and strangely reminiscent of the palaces on the Grand Canal in Venice. They are beautiful specimens of

the domestic architecture of the thirteenth century. The ground-floor of each façade is composed of a series of Gothic arches. The first and second floors are pierced by two or three openings, each composed of several windows, whose pointed arches repose on clustered columns with foliated capitals of exquisite design. Most of the sculpture is lavished on these windows or on the string-courses which run across the design at the bases of the window-openings and the spring of the arches. Quadrupeds, birds, figures, walk upon these courses or decorate their extremities—whole scenes of the hunt embellishing one house.

As the city increased in size, the original nucleus inside the topmost wall grew too small for its needs and jumped over the barrier; so a new rampart was built, only to be succeeded by another and another, each enclosing a larger area than its predecessor, until the inner city was surrounded by a quintuple wall pierced by more than fifty gates, many of which yet remain. The town has never overlapped the fifth wall, below which the hill slopes remain a succession of grain-fields and vineyards with the cemetery, cypress-grown, clinging close to the lowest western wall.

One day I saw a funeral winding its way to the little grave-yard through a dark and narrow street—

Stairway of the Pater Noster, Cordes

so dark, indeed, that the candles carried by the altar-boys shone clearly in the midday light, and so narrow

that, to let it pass, I must needs take refuge in a doorway. Ahead walked the priest chanting, with the choir-boys; then the bier carried by hand—three stalwart men on each side, for the town's thoroughfares are so steep that no hearse drawn by horses could be led through them. It was a strange and impressive sight—impressive from its utter simplicity—with the long train of black-robed mourners—the men and then the women hobbling along over the rough rock pavements.

The streets of the town, if such they may be called, for they are more like by-ways, backing and twisting on themselves, or following the old *chemins de ronde* by the dismantled ramparts, are crowded with half-ruined houses, many of them rearranged from fine old buildings. Ugly little modern windows have been opened in the corners of beautiful casements of the Renaissance; Gothic windows *en croix* have been entirely walled up, and near them grin fantastic gargoyles strangely mutilated.

One interesting by-way, leading to the Tour de l'Horloge, is called the Stairway of the Pater Noster. A chapel, belonging to the Brothers of St. Joseph, stood near the head of the steps. At their base

was the residence of the brothers, so that in going to and from service they climbed the stairs, of which there are just the same number as there are words in the pater noster. Thus, by saying one word on each step, the prayer could be finished when the top or bottom was reached.

To-day the town is sleepy and almost devoid of activity, and its population has dwindled from three thousand to eighteen hundred souls. Created for struggle and resistance in a time of bloody quarrels, Cordes could only maintain her importance in more peaceful, commercial ages by coming down from the summit to which she owed her originality and her strength. This she has refused to do. Now the railroad has left her isolated, so that she has entered upon a period of long and incurable decay which will eventually leave her a mere ruin, proudly perched on her far-away hill top.

II

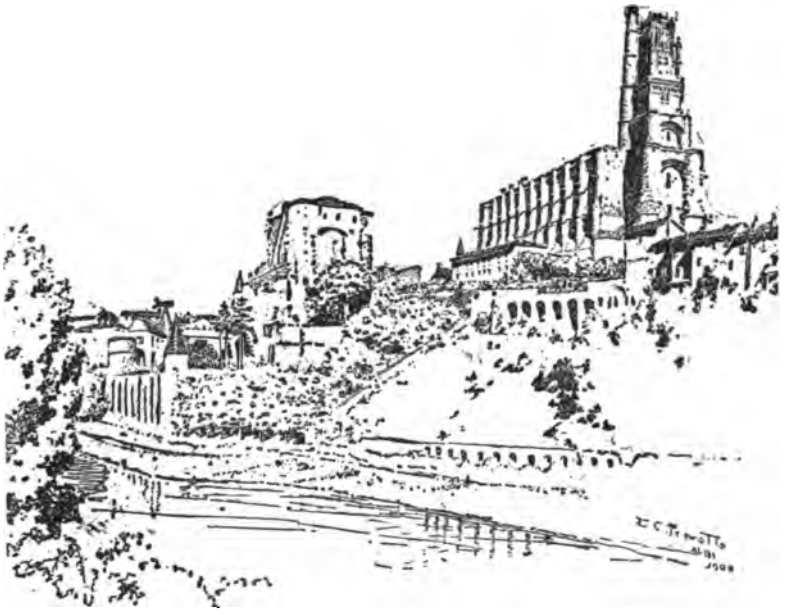
ALBI

THE little local train had just traversed an uninteresting stretch of meadow-land when the huge red mass of the Cathedral of Albi loomed into view—a mass most imposing in size, but not picturesque when viewed thus over the flat grain-fields.

From the station I hurried through a succession of modern French provincial streets, some attempting to be boulevards by lining up their rows of young plane trees, dotting the dazzling roadway with their scanty shade, others filled with ill-stocked shops and paved with the roughest cobbles. Soon, however, the streets narrowed; the houses took on a quainter aspect, huddled closer together for mutual support and protection, thrust out their upper stories on heavy corbels, and raised their roof-lines into pointed gables and high-peaked dormer-windows; and finally an abrupt turning brought me into the market-place.

THREE OLD HILL-TOWNS OF GASCONY

It was nine in the morning, and the market was at its height—and such a market!—one of those southern marts, where every bright colour is displayed at once,



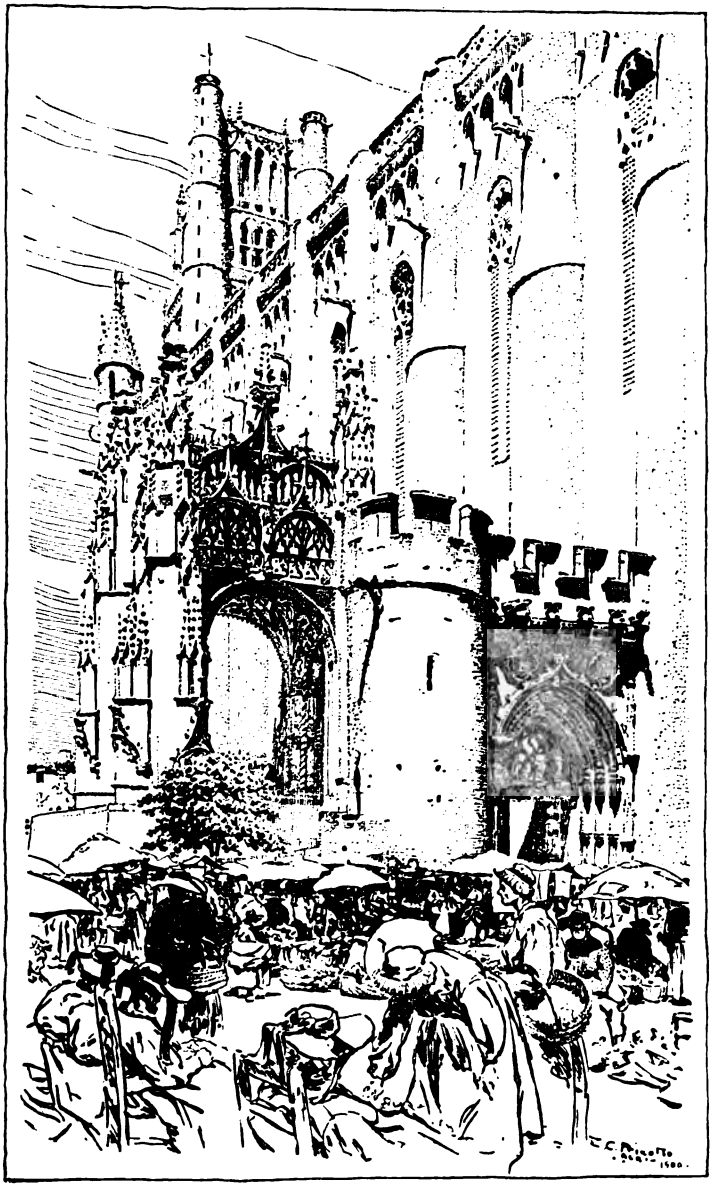
The Cathedral and Archbishop's Palace, Albi

where every heap of gray-blue cabbages and every pile of rich red berries and golden apricots is sheltered by an umbrella of a different hue—green, red, blue, purple—where every woman wears a bright kerchief

or a knot of gay ribbon. And such a clatter of tongues, and such animation! How interesting the coifs! The old women in little, close-fitting caps, with wide double ruffles round the face, framing it in an aureole of white; the young women with their hair bound in gay plaid kerchiefs, covered by large straw hats of curious fashion, with low crowns bound by wide bands of velvet ribbon.

A Side Street, Albi

Behind this animated scene, brilliant in the glare of the hot southern sun, towers the red-brick apse of the Cathedral of Saint Cecilia. Half-way up to its roof-line, thick and solid walls, devoid of detail, seem by their threatening masses to defy all attack, and fill the mind



Albi Cathedral from the Market

with a feeling of mysterious fear. The upper half of these gigantic walls is pierced by long slits of windows, like loopholes, and the entire church, from basement to balustrade, is strengthened by round, tower-like buttresses, so that one is tempted to ask, "Is this a fortress—is it a church?" As we look at the crenelated portal of Dominique-de-Florence, it, too, is a castle gate, though decorated with statues of the Virgin and saints. But beyond it we catch a glimpse of the marvellous baldaquin of the south portal in the richest flamboyant Gothic, and we say that surely must be the entrance to a temple of God. The interior leaves no vestige of doubt in the mind—its soaring arches, its chapels, its delicate frescoes of the Last Judgment, with Giotto-like figures moving in landscapes of rare simplicity; its rood-screen, whose stone is as delicately wrought as a piece of Valenciennes lace, and whose canopied niches are peopled with countless statues and enriched with traceries so intricate that the mind is appalled at the power of imagination that conceived them—all tell us that it is religious faith alone which has accomplished such marvels.

Around the cathedral, wind the crooked little streets of the old city which sought protection under its

frowning walls and encircling ramparts—a twisting labyrinth of by-ways and alleys where the sun seems to bestow its rays regretfully—streets so narrow as to be quite impassable for wagons, and in which passers-by are suddenly seen in a ray of sunshine as it squeezes between the tall buildings, and then are swallowed up completely in the darkness beyond.

But the place we liked best to linger in was across the Tarn in the suburb of La Madeleine. There in a garden, under the shade of a group of locust trees, sitting in the cool, tall grasses, we passed the late afternoon hours. And what a view to look upon! Below us the broad river flows lazily by. Across it the steep hillside is shored up by long arcaded embankments, each supporting a lovely garden, whose flowers, trellises, and clambering vines glow in the warm sunshine. Groups of houses with rich ochre walls, bright green shutters, little iron-railed balconies and red-tiled roofs string their irregular course along the bluffs, ending in the prison-like mass of the archbishop's palace. Above, dominating all this rustic beauty, towers the glorious mass of the cathedral, its lofty west tower gorgeously transfigured by the setting sun, glowing like a coral in all the

A Lane, Albi

shades of red from shell-pink to richest crimson, detaching its luminous mass from the deep-blue sky.

After the heat of the summer day, a delicious coolness comes to refresh the sun-beaten town, and every door and window is flung wide open. Each occupant abandons his four walls to inhale a breath of fresh air and to seek simple amusement on the promenade. Here giant sycamores and chestnuts interlace their century-old branches in a vaulted canopy and a darkness lowers: a veiled mystery, born of the approaching night, enveloping the shadowy avenue. The massive tree trunks—vague yet mighty columns—become solid walls as they disappear in far perspectives to the city lights twinkling in the distance. Scattered among the trees glow coloured lanterns. Here a glint catches the falling waters of a fountain, lighting the sparkling jets of crystal; there a gleam falls full upon white-gowned maidens as they walk arm in arm, or touches the red epaulets and white gloves and spats of the soldiers. The clear voices of young people ring out in merry laughter; mothers tend their babes in arms; workmen drag their heavy-nailed boots as they shuffle along, while old *rentiers*, showing ample expanses of white waistcoat, lean

heavily on their canes as they grumble their deep-rooted convictions to their companions. Gay *kiosques* blaze out their attractions; shooting-galleries and wheels of fortune, alluring chances in all sorts of seductive lotteries, make easy game of the soldiers. The military band blows forth its lustiest notes, and young and old forget their daily toil for bread—forget their burdens borne in the mid-day sun—and are happy in the night shadows under the spreading branches.

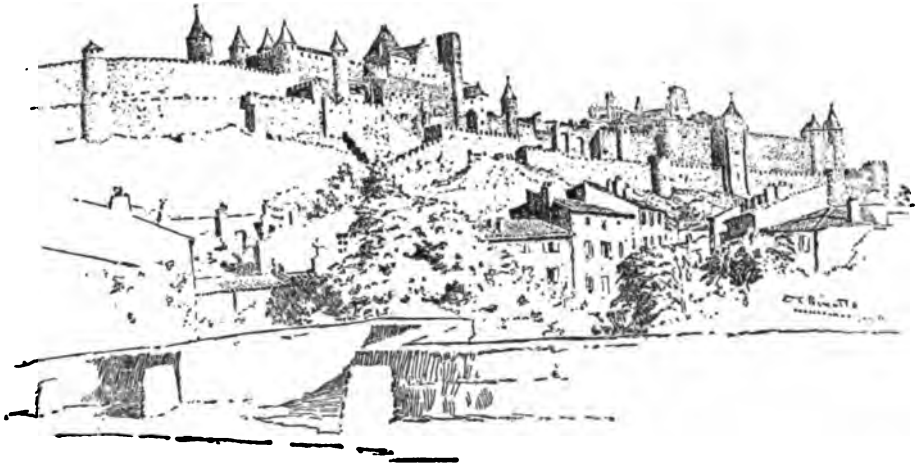
III

CARCASSONNE

WE may have read much of the Cité of Carcassonne and seen many photographs of its walls and towers, yet we do not seem in any way prepared, in our latter-day civilisation, for the strangeness of aspect of this mediæval city, crowning the rolling hills upon which it is built, with the silhouette of its double line of ramparts and the profile of its innumerable, slate-roofed towers of irregular size, its crenelated castle and fortress church. And, strange to say, this *chef d'œuvre* of feudal fortification, carefully restored by Viollet-le-Duc and kept in fine repair by an enlightened administration, is comparatively little visited by tourists, though seen from one of the much-travelled railways of southern France.

Yet one who spends a day or two in wandering along its well-kept *chemins de ronde*, on whose broad flagstones the spurred heels of steel-clad knights still

seem to ring; or peeps through the long slits of the *meurtrières* or down the abysses of the machicolations; or climbs the winding stairs of its turrets, cunningly guarded by doors at unlooked-for angles, will



The Upper City, Carcassonne

come away with an object lesson in feudal warfare which will light up the pages of history with a new interest. Every detail of barbacan and portcullis, of drawbridge and postern-gate, of *hourds* and *volets*—every cunning system of attack and defence from the strong but ill-laid masonry of the Visigoth to the

perfections of Saint Louis and Philip the Rash, can here be studied from the life.

It takes but little imagination to people the silent streets of the Cité with armoured crossbow men, to see the populace rushing to the walls to pour boiling oil and hurl the very masonry of their houses upon the soldiers of the King.

After its redoubtable defences were completed, this virgin city was never taken, for, during the whole period of the middle ages, when all the south-west of France was ravaged by the wars with England, and city after city was attacked and taken by Edward the Black Prince, the Cité of Carcassonne alone was deemed impregnable and only gave itself up when all of Languedoc had fallen before the conqueror.

Now from the top of the beetling walls one looks over smiling valley lands—vineyards and orchards—far over to the sombre Montagne Noire on the one hand and to the snow-clad peaks of the Pyrenees on the other. Below and near by flows the River Aude, spanned by its twelfth-century bridge, and on its far bank we descry the new city of Carcassonne, itself six hundred years old and to-day a commercial town of some importance.

Within the walls of the old upper city, the narrow little streets are almost deserted—a few old women knitting or gossiping in the cool corners, a cat slink-

The Porte Narbonnaise, Carcassonne

ing along in the tiny shadows of the high southern sun. It was one of those first hot June days when I wandered through these little lanes as the noon hour approached, seeking to make arrangements for my

lunch, so that I might be spared the descent of the long hill to my hotel in the new town. A turning of the street brought me before a café, but there I was told that they served no meals. Just beyond, in the Rue de l'Aude, I met the wife of the *concierge* of the fortifications, a fresh-looking, kindly-faced woman, to whom I explained my dilemma. But no, there was no place where Monsieur could dine. I hinted—yes, it *was* a hint, and I confess it—that all I wanted was a bit of bread, an egg, and a salad, and she took the cue by saying, "*Pardi—I* can provide *that*, if Monsieur is not too *exigeant*." So we entered a neat little house, where I busied myself looking at photographs until lunch was announced.

My cover was laid at a round table in the corner of the kitchen, with the custodian himself beside me and his wife across the table. But instead of the meagre meal which I had suggested, I found prepared a veritable little feast. The "best linen" was on the table, which was arranged with care, and on it were carefully disposed a rosy dish of radishes, fresh olives, sliced *saucisson d'Arles*, a pickled mackerel, and cold ham. Monsieur filled my glass with a charming grace and asked me to sample his wine, for it would be of

special interest to me, having been grown on the very ramparts of Carcassonne! Yes, the little vineyard was just in front of the church of St. Nazaire, and they pressed the wine themselves. The sausage, too, proved to be native-born, and the ham was its own brother, for they were made from two little white pigs which the custodian himself had raised the winter before! So the luncheon passed—the eggs, the *tomates farcies* cooked in olive-oil and served in an earthen dish, the fresh, crisp salad, *roquefort*, and fruits—relished with a running fire of small talk and anecdote from my host and hostess. Then the coffee was ground in a little mill before my eyes, its delicious aroma filling the air, and served strong and hot. An hour later, when, as I rose to say good-bye, my hand strayed toward my pocket, the good wife lifted up her hands and cried, "*Mais, Monsieur, vous plaisantez!*" Happy people who have enough to give some away, and take in and feast a perfect stranger at their board—kindly folks of the Midi with their warm southern temperament, who carry, as my host expressed it, their hearts within their hands!

THE END

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

This book is due on the last **DATE** stamped below.

APR 2 1969

DEC 10 REC'D

DEC 10 REC'D

NOV 21 1973

NOV 14 REC'D

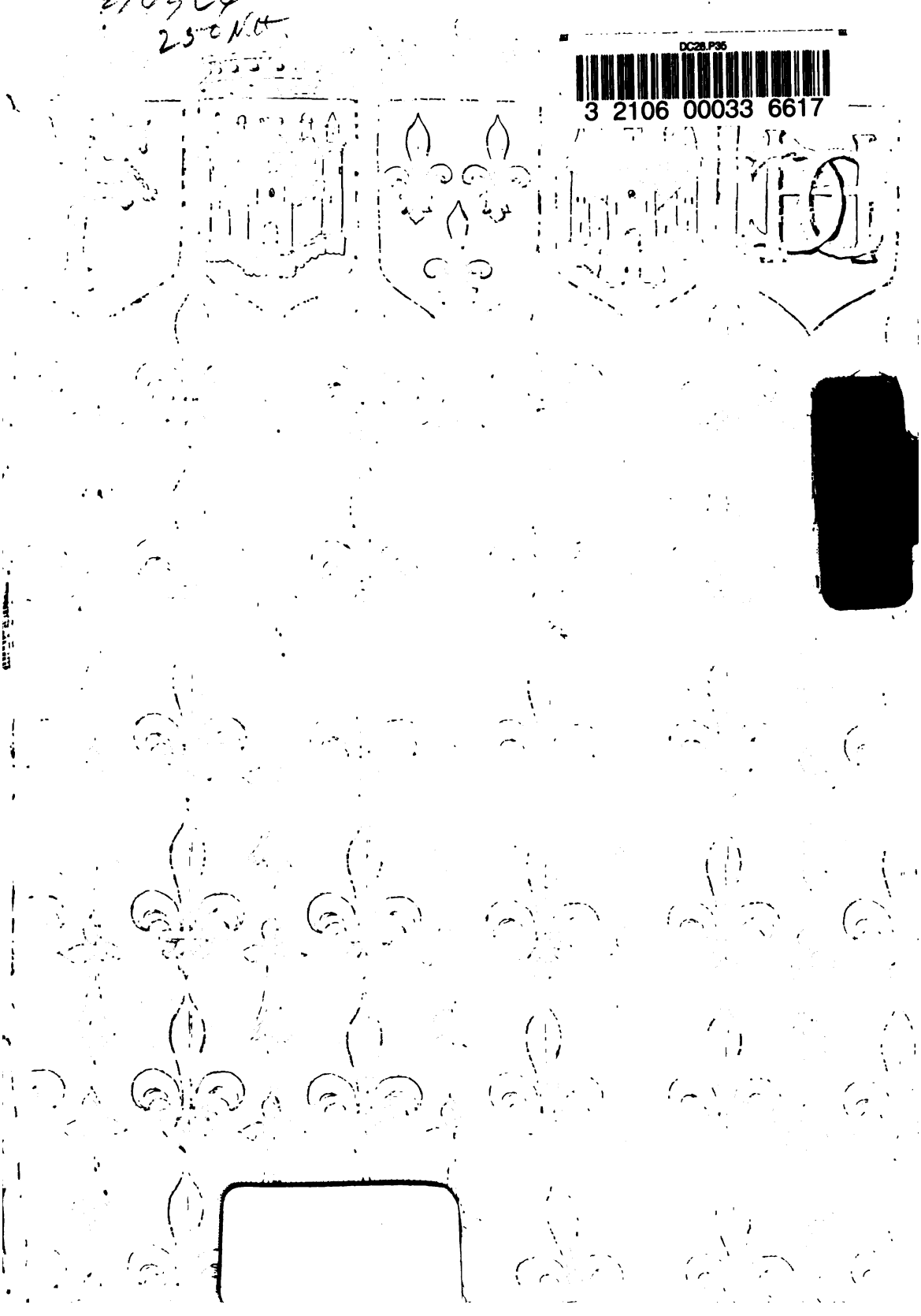
APR 23 REC'D

FEB 19 '80

FEB 20 1980 REC'D

AS. 1/93 Th

50m-6,'67(H2523s8)2373

STORED AT NRLF

DC28.P35
3 2106 00033 6617